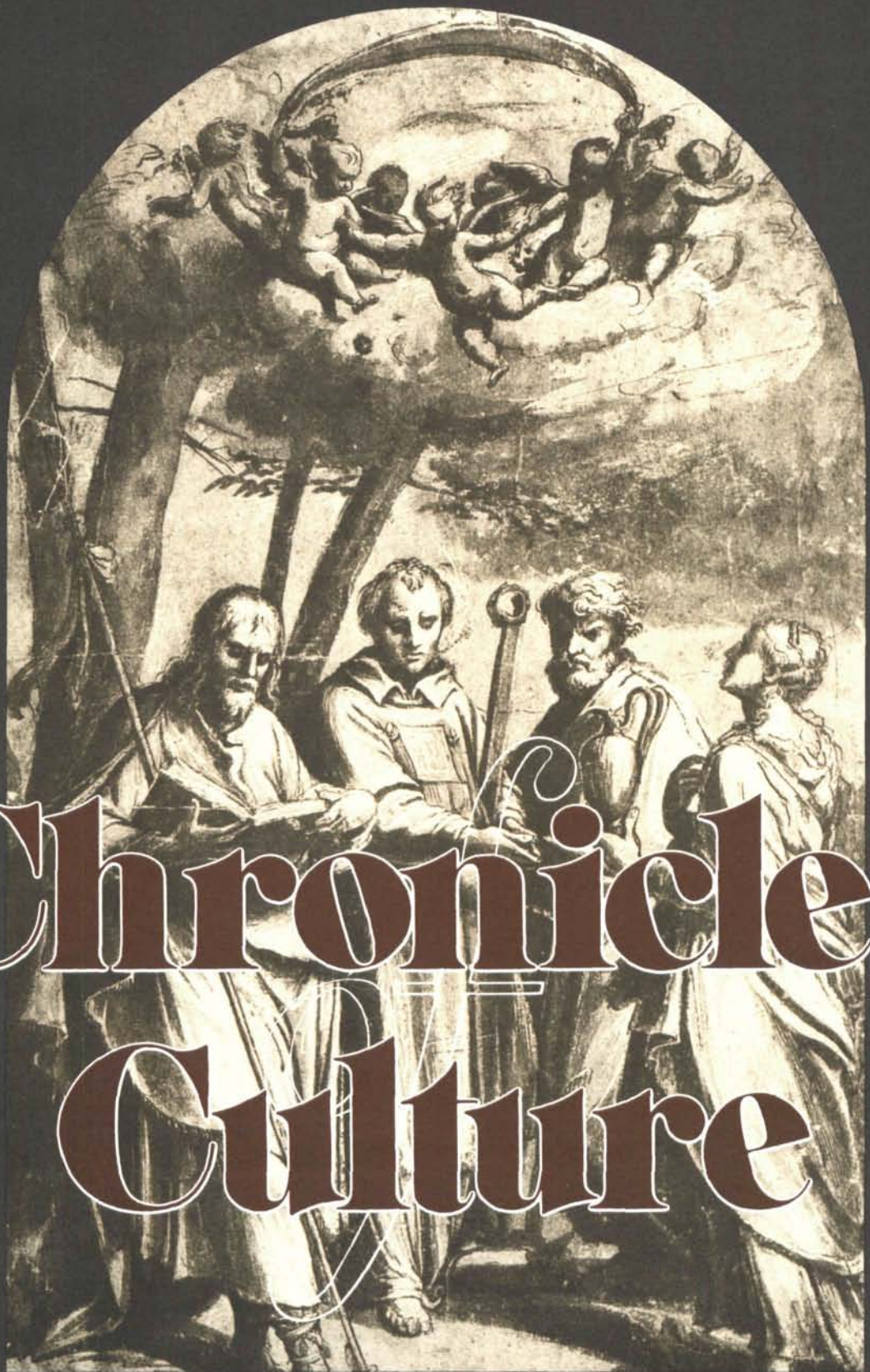
The Return of God



Chronicles of Culture

Volume 7, Number 8 August 1983 $1.50

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Chronicles of Culture
Vol. 7, No. 8 August 1983

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Chronicles of Culture (ISSN 0163-1187) is published monthly by The Rockford Institute; President: John Howard. Editorial and business offices: 934 North Main Street, Rockford, Illinois 61103. Editorial Phone: (815) 964-5054. Subscription phone: (815) 964-5811. Editor: Leopold Tyrmand; Associate Editor: Gary S. Vasilash; Managing Editor: Rebecca Woosley; Editorial Intern: Bryce Christensen; Editorial Secretary: LeAnn Manning; Publisher: Richard A. Vaughan; Production Coordinator: Lindy Ellingwood; Subscription Manager: Anita Fedora. Printed by Wilson-Hall Co. Technical Services: Marge Wollschlager Composition. Subscriptions: $18.00 one year.

Cover: "Studio per Il Quadro Dei Quattro Santi," by Andrea D'Agnolo (Andrea Del Sarto) (1486-1531), from the MacLeish Collection, The Rare Print Cabinet, Rockford College Library. Original vignette by Warren Chappell. Graphic materials within the text from *293 Renaissance Woodcuts for Artists and Illustrators* (New York: Dover Publications, 1968). Copyright © 1983 by The Rockford Institute. All rights reserved.

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COMMENT

The United States is unique in its public commitment to the Deity. Ever since our country was founded on a claim of natural rights endowed by our Creator, our greatest leaders have made reference to Divine Providence a central element of our public discourse. Even our most skeptical public officials have deemed it appropriate to acknowledge, as Justice William O. Douglas once wrote, that Americans are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being.

Despite the prominence of the Divinity in our official rhetoric—and His enduring influence over the conduct of many American citizens—the Creator of our lives and liberties now enjoys a less prominent position among those who shape our culture. Our professors and pundits are likely to scoff if accused of accepting the Nietzschean dictum "God is dead," but their guidance would effectively divorce His influence from our public lives. Rather than acknowledge the primacy which we accord the Creator in our constitutional documents, these sages have magnified the "wall of separation between Church and State" from a microscopic comment in one of Thomas Jefferson's letters into a juridical doctrine intended to relegate religion strictly to our private lives. One might think that the self-appointed apologists for our diminishing secular morality believe themselves capable of inflating their own importance by attempting public diminution of the role of Divine Providence.

The elevation of "separation of Church and State" to preeminence in our constitutional catechism has had paradoxical consequences for public discourse. In earlier generations, the invocation of scriptural references in political rhetoric would prompt a rhetorical flourish of a competing religious reference. Today, invocation of biblical support for a position routinely earns a "sectarian" label for the argument. Such arguments are admitted to have "potential appeal" for "some segments" of the American people, but before the position can gain serious treatment in forums of public discussion, they must be recast in "purely secular" terms. The Bible can never be cited for its enduring message, but must be interpolated according to today's allegedly "caring and sensitive" needs.

This trend continues unabated as what even our most skeptical commentators must concur are moral questions gain increasing prominence in our politics. We thus conduct a truncated public debate: the Supreme Court affirms that abortion is a religious question, then denies the relevance of religious responses to its decisions. Debate over capital punishment addresses questions from rehabilitation to retribution, but religious conceptions of justice (that might guide even deliberations about rehabilitation along different paths than those traversed by modern psychology) are treated as so sectarian that arguments about just retribution rarely gain a public hearing. We revert to an old discussion about the possibilities of "selective" conscientious objection, while we

sever our public rulings from the Creator of all conscience, to the extent that even Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church appear unwilling to assert (perhaps even they have become unfamiliar with) teachings about justice and war that have guided civilization for over 1500 years. Ignoring these intellectual roots, the American people confront modern questions of war and peace as if the fear of violent death had never had any influence on human thought before the detonation of the atom, and as if religion had nothing to say that might expand the horizons of those who believe that the only important questions center on preserving life in this world. And, rather than attempting to counter this mind-set, today's more prominent clergy seem to have their voices, as well, suitably attuned to the gospel of contemporary secularism. Trendy clergymen spouting militant liberalism can gain the endorsement of the secular choir almost because they defy the religious heritage that provides their initial claim to moral stature. Those who laud such defiance as an indication of "courage" lack the insight to see that such secular praise really merits religious censure because it abandons God for the idolatry of this world. Similarly, the cacophony of the antinuclear faction among our contemporary clergy is heralded by establishment commentators so uncertain of moral norms that they can hail these charlatans as prophets. These sages are so isolated from real Scripture that it never occurs to them to ask whether those who would limit American defenses in the face of growing Soviet armaments are acting as evil shepherds leading their flocks astray.

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Religious arguments, of course, have had a few moments in the secular sun in recent years. One notes, however, that they are accorded public recognition only if they concur with the "trends" identified by the "progressive" gospel. Clergy who address questions such as the role of religion in education, the moral condition of events that pass as modern entertainment, or the virtues that can be nurtured through economic liberty receive the ultimate contemporary denunciation: these questions "have not kept up with the times." God's arguments, too, are supposed to succumb to the moral myopia that views "newer" and "better" as synonyms. This moral myopia could be sustained as long as the "progressive" prelates of modern morality could shape public discourse around very popular civil-rights causes and a very unpopular war. Once the moralistic fervor that inspired advocates of these causes became wrapped in the ambiguous consequences of their success, and the outrages of abortion and Soviet armament could no longer be ignored by any morally sentient beings, religious arguments reentered American politics.

The movement to curb the consequences of legalized abortion in the United States has been the most productive vehicle for those who wish to analyze today's fads in the perspective of enduring standards. The Catholic Church, speaking through the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, succeeded for a while in establishing abortion as "its" issue. But even in this position, its leadership has been characterized by bad political judgment and isolation from its own roots. The Church secularized and Americanized its arguments to gain support for its opposition to abortion, concentrating its argument on the "right to life" of the unborn, although that right was seldom traced beyond the Declaration of Independence. Truncating the argument in this fashion serves secular purposes, but it limits the ability of the clergy to speak to their congregations on the broader dimensions of the abortion debate. It also prevents abortion's other opponents from incorporating different dimensions of religious arguments into the political debate. To cite only the most obvious example, proponents of abortion have aligned their arguments with the movement to "liberate" women from traditional notions of virtue. One steeped in a religious argument should remember that "liberation" from one of this world's passions frequently is achieved by enslaving the spirit through different passions.

While nonsecular arguments have found a voice on what has been labeled the "religious right," the Catholic Church in the United States has moved to defuse its seemingly strong identification with some of the less socially acceptable opponents of abortion. Using the debate surrounding various drafts of the pastoral letter on nuclear weapons, the staff of the United States Catholic Conference has done its best to merge opposition to abortion and opposition to nuclear weapons as the new "prolife" position. The tactic enables the Catholic bureaucracy to denigrate the contributions of Representative Henry Hyde (who believes in serious consideration of the Soviet menace) even as it "moderates" the abysmal record of Senator Edward Kennedy (who regularly supports public funding of abortions). The new "prolife" position has the dubious merits of compromising the Church's traditional teachings on abortion and communism and aligning it with those who respect neither its traditional *nor* its compromised positions.

Every thoughtful adult recognizes that religious leaders have a great deal to say in the numerous areas where politics involves moral questions. One expects, however, that when people speak in the name of religion, they will speak from the enduring word of God, rather than from the preachings of the poseurs who would recast His message by replacing prophecy with progressivism. The work of God depends on a tradition much older than the doctrine of natural rights that sustains American liberty. Given the contemporary alternatives—a regime of natural rights or a regime that denies both natural rights and their Creator—it is hardly surprising that the Divine Word is returning to our politics despite the best efforts of leading sages to isolate it. Religion reenters our politics even as it becomes increasingly polarized. Those engaged in the developing discussions of religion and politics must be fully aware that the Creator does not wear the moral blinders of our time. His message is one of eternal salvation, not one of a comfortable life on earth.

—Edward J. Lynch

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Mindless Intelligence

James Bamford: *The Puzzle Palace: A Report on America's Most Secret Agency;* Houghton Mifflin; Boston.

by Samuel T. Francis

James Bamford's rather massive account of the National Security Agency (NSA) is one of the most recent examples of a genre that was invented only in the past generation but which has already produced small libraries. This genre may be called the "intelligence exposé," and its characteristic conventions are: (1) the revelation of what was hitherto secret or the confirmation of what had been suspected or alleged but not known for certain; (2) the use of leaks from purportedly knowledgeable or authoritative but always anonymous sources as the means of revealing or confirming the information; (3) the allegation that what is revealed or confirmed is of unparalleled scandalous, criminal, or abusive nature; and (4) the argument, generally insinuated throughout the text but explicitly developed in the peroration, that unless "real reforms" are forthcoming and the revealed abuses brought to a speedy termination, the republic will be subverted and the citizenry delivered to the most degrading servitude. Sometimes those who excel in this genre do not allow its conventions to stand in the way of making valuable contributions to public knowledge of what the intelligence community is, what it is supposed to do, and what it has or has not done. Often, especially in the early days of the genre, they dwelt simply on what the intelligence agencies were not supposed to do but allegedly did anyway, and the result was a body of literature that was self-flagellant, sensationalist, and generally not very accurate. Another result was the virtual ruination of the American intelligence community in the mid-1970's.

Alas, Mr. Bamford's tome is not up to snuff. In the gay old days of the 1970's a journalist could make his reputation and his fortune by revealing assassination plots, surreptitious mail-openings, surveillance of celebrities, human-experimentation programs, and a surfeit of other penny-dreadful schemes at the expense of the CIA and FBI as well as at the expense of a serious regard for truth and national security. But those days are gone forever, it seems. The best that investigative journalists can come up with now is some rather hoary information about the CIA's use of ex-nazis as intelligence agents in the aftermath of World War II (that the CIA might have had a need for agents who knew something about Eastern Europe and had recourse to the people who had been tyrannizing large portions of it for the preceding 10 years or so is unthinkable to them). Mr. Bamford has had to make do with the NSA, the largest, perhaps the most important, and certainly the most boring component of the American intelligence community. What the NSA does is collect Signals Intelligence (SIGINT), which in turn is composed of Communications Intelligence (COMINT), Electronics Intelligence (ELINT), and Telemetry Intelligence (TELINT). It does so through what is called "National Technical Means" (NTM)—the satellites, radar installations, spy ships, giant antennae and platforms, computers, and other highly sophisticated, expensive, and secret interception and decipherment equipment that are centered at or commanded from NSA headquarters at Fort George Meade, Maryland. What NSA does not do—and here is Mr. Bamford's problem—is collect Human Intelligence (HUMINT), intelligence produced by human beings. Because NSA has never been involved in HUMINT, it has never had to put up with the foibles of human agents (at least of our human agents) to the extent that the CIA and FBI have, and consequently there is very little in the way of scandal, crime, or abuse in which Mr. Bamford can wallow. Because NSA's activities involve the development and use of some of the most advanced technology in the world, it has long been the most secretive and protected of the intelligence services. The novelty of Mr. Bamford's book is that he has managed to put together some 400 pages about an agency of which almost nothing is publicly known. Quantity, of course, has nothing to do with quality, or value.

NSA and other parts of the intelligence community are said to be all adither over *The Puzzle Palace,* and rightly so. Regardless of how valuable the information in the book might be to our enemies, the mere fact that Bamford was able to get so much of it should be profoundly disturbing to those whose job it is to prevent such information from getting out. It means that NSA, whose very charter in the form of a 1952 Presidential order was classified beyond the Top Secret Level, is full of security risks and that some distinguished alumni of the agency have been talking about things they should not have.

That NSA—like most governmental organizations these days in the United

Dr. Francis is with the office of Senator John P. East, where he is a legislative assistant for national security.

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States—leaks like the *Titanic* may be the single most useful piece of knowledge to be gleaned from *The Puzzle Palace.* If one wants to know what color the corridors are at Fort Meade or how Admiral Inman decorated his office or what kinds of academic degrees various NSA administrators have received, then Bamford's is the book to read. If one wants spy stories or expects a train of previously unsuspected outrages to be revealed, he will perhaps be titillated but not fulfilled. What passes for such abuses in the history of NSA apparently consists of rather marginal involvement in the aborted Huston Plan, the interception of international communications from American citizens, and participation in a plan to collect information on foreign powers trying to foment civil disturbance in the United States in the 1960's—most of which was known years ago. Bamford has little to say about these activities that is new, significant, or useful.

The serious student of intelligence policy will be sorely disappointed with *The Puzzle Palace,* since what he wants from a book on NSA are answers to the questions: (1) What are the real capabilities of National Technical Means, and (2) What is actually done with the data collected through NTM after it is passed through the analytical processes and on to the policymakers? About these crucial questions Bamford is virtually mute. The capabilities of NTM are of crucial importance because, since at least the early 1970's, when James Schlesinger became director of the CIA, there has been an ever-increasing trend toward more reliance on technical means of collection and less dependence on human collection. The principal reasons for this trend are (1) ideological: the intelligence and defense establishments, like other policy organizations, have been immersed in a positivistic prepossession that refuses to believe something is real unless it can be precisely documented or measured; and (2) bureaucratic: the more technical the means of collection, the more expensive it is—hence, more money, space, men, and resources for the agency. Unfortunately, it is known that NTM has certain inherent limitations, which Bamford seldom mentions and never discusses seriously.

Although the public has been repeatedly told of satellites that can photograph the license plates of trucks, for example (thereby fostering the illusion that satellites can reveal all), it has not frequently been told that the higher the orbit of the satellite, the smaller the resolution of the camera, and the lower the orbit, the smaller the area that can be photographed. Nor has the public been reminded (by either Bamford or those officials in the intelligence establishment whom he discusses) that conventional photographic equipment cannot often penetrate cloud cover and smoke, see inside buildings or weapons systems or beneath the earth, or be effective at night. Nor can satellites be everywhere at all times, and even if they could be, their value would not be appreciably increased. Photographs, like even more cryptic data collected through NTM, must be interpreted, and the controversies surrounding interpretation of COMINT, ELINT, and TELINT would fill at least one book.

The controversies over the degree to which NTM can be deliberately deceived would fill another volume. The Soviets may be able and willing to emit false signals to deceive us as to their capabilities and to mix false signals with true signals to confuse us further. The false signals intercepted by NSA (or other services involved in NTM) would then be subject to all the controversies of interpretation that pertain to true signals as well as to the question of their truth or falsity or the degree of mix and the purposes for falsity, truth, or a mixture. Most important, however, is the limitation of NTM that it cannot reveal the intentions or motivations of the target. Bamford discusses how the NSA had the ability to monitor the radio conversations of Kremlin leaders in their cars. A remarkable ability, indeed; but Soviet policies are not formulated in cars, and only human assets who know intimately the institutions, characters, procedures, constraints, interests, ideas, and values that constitute Soviet policymaking are in a position to report it reliably and evaluate it responsibly. Not only is there no serious discussion of these problems in Bamford's book, there is not even any significant allusion to them.

"Bamford's book is encyclopedic . . . . morbidly fascinating."
—*The Progressive*

"Bamford deserves special praise for . . . a considerable achievement."
—*New York Review of Books*

If the problems of NTM capability are complicated, one can only guess at the problems encountered in informing policymakers of the NTM product. The use made of intelligence by policymakers is one of the perennial problems of the intelligence profession and its observers. How much was known of Japanese intentions before the Pearl Harbor attack, of Soviet missiles in Cuba before the crisis of 1962, of Cuban involvement in Latin American insurgencies today—and how policymakers used or failed to use this information—are among the most important historical and current questions posed to us. Mr. Bamford does not allude to them or to the even more crucial question of the accuracy of the Soviet estimate, the challenges to which in 1976 led to a revolution in American foreign-policy thinking.

The overreliance on NTM, the incautious assumption that "scientific" intelligence is more reliable than human insights and knowledge, the downgrading of HUMINT and the quite harmful effect on human collection of Bobby Ray Inman and CIA Director Stansfield Turner are the really important issues revolving

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around NSA, and Bamford ignores them. His book may be considered a valuable account of the structural chronology and morphology of NSA, and it does contain some account of Soviet penetrations and other NSA losses (the attack on the *Liberty* and the *Pueblo,* for example). But Bamford's obsession with secrecy and the much-ballyhooed "right to know" is trite and unpersuasive, and it leads him to neglect the more serious aspects of NSA, which also happens to represent one of the more serious problems of modern governments—the replacement of human skills by technical expertise and the consequent inability of governments to deal with human problems. Four centuries ago Machiavelli warned both princes and republics not to rely on mercenaries, artillery, and fortified defenses. He is often criticized for ignoring the importance of these factors in securing political and military power, but Machiavelli's real concern was that states would rely on such gadgetry at the expense of the moral and emotional forces that underlie the strength, security, and interests of the state. In the philosophy of James Bamford, as in that of the technocrats he dissects, such forces are not even dreamt of because their ideology renders the moral and emotional realities of human nature invisible. Instead, the establishment pursues the appearance of security through technological illusion, and critics like Bamford promote the illusion of freedom by denying the need for security.

The Puzzle Palace sports a quotation from George Orwell as its motto and ends with a quotation from Frank Church. One feels rather sorry for Mr. Bamford, because after so much effort he finds so little to justify either one. □

Media Magic: Victories into Defeats

Peter Braestrup: *Big Story: How the American Press and Television Reported and Interpreted the Crisis of Tet 1968 in Vietnam and Washington* (Abridged edition); Yale University Press; New Haven, CT.

by Robert Nisbet

This valuable book was first published in two volumes in 1977. Such was its immediately recognized authority that it created a very considerable amount of distress in schools of journalism and in the higher offices of the print and electronic media. And well it should have, for it is difficult to imagine a more humiliating document than this book in its impact upon publishers, editors, producers, and anchormen. Rarely if ever have the media been caught in flagrante delicto in as searching, meticulously investigated, and superbly written a fashion as they have by Peter Braestrup. And seldom has the difference between objective reality and contrived, falsified reality been made more stark.

Peter Braestrup was the proper man to undertake the seven years of detailed investigation that went into the making of *Big Story.* A combat Marine veteran of Korea, he went to South Vietnam as reporter; in due time he was Bureau Chief of the *Washington Post.* Korea had blooded him, as it were, so he was used to the realities of battle in a degree denied to most or all of his fellow reporters in Vietnam. The reader will look in vain for anger and recrimination in the book. There is no air of righteousness, no finger pointing, no moralizing. The author describes himself as simply "an active if less than omniscient participant in the Viet Nam coverage I describe."

The result is damning nevertheless. Braestrup holds the glass up to myriad reporters, editors, commentators, and anchormen in respect to their coverage of the single most decisive battle of the whole Vietnam War—or rather what could have been the most decisive battle had that battle been assimilated by official Washington and the media in a way bearing some correspondence to reality.

On January 30-31, 1968, the Vietcong, aided heavily by North Vietnamese regular soldiers, unleashed a powerful assault upon towns and cities in South Vietnam, including Saigon. Even in the first waves, more than 80,000 troops were involved. Moreover, they were overwhelmingly the cream of the enemy's forces, well trained, bold, and resourceful—and well armed. Almost immediately the communists were able to surround the American Marine outpost in Khe San; they held it under siege for days. For three weeks they occupied the former imperial capital city, Hue. Even the American Embassy in Saigon was invaded by sappers, and although they never achieved control, there were some anxious hours.

But despite the careful preparation for the surprise onslaught, and despite the very high quality of troops, the attack failed utterly. Within a few days the eventual outcome of the battle was no longer in doubt. The South Vietnamese troops, fighting bravely and effectively—joined, of course, by American soldiers—came very close to completely destroying the attacking communist forces. Tens of thousands of elite, long-experienced fighters of the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese regulars were killed or captured. As wave after wave of the communist soldiers came out of the jungle and the villages they were met by deadly firepower.

Braestrup quotes tellingly from another reporter present, Don Obendorfer:

> It is clear that the attack force—and particularly the indigenous Vietcong who did most of the fighting and dying—suffered a grievous military setback. . . . The Vietcong lost the best of a generation of resistance fighters, and after Tet, increasing numbers of North Vietnamese had to be sent south to fill the ranks. The war became in-

Dr. Nisbet's most recent book is Prejudices: A Philosophical Dictionary.

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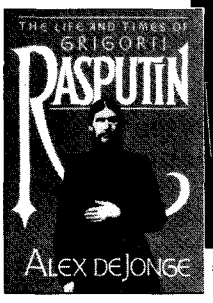

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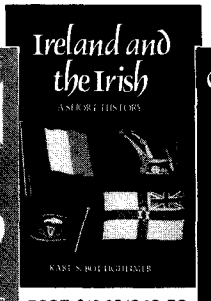

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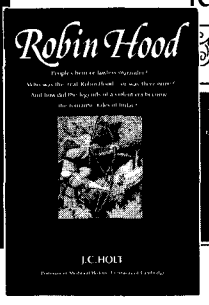

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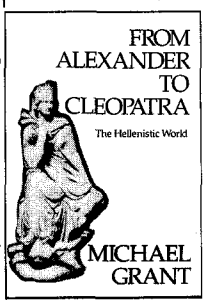

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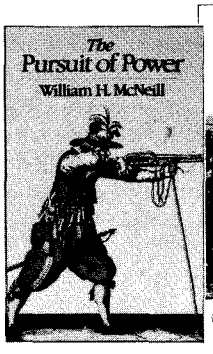

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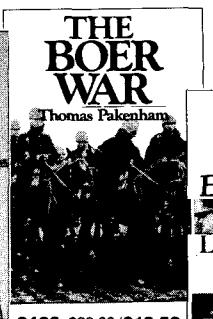

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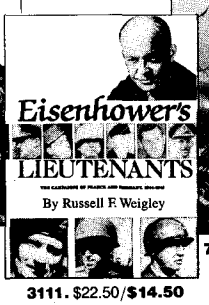

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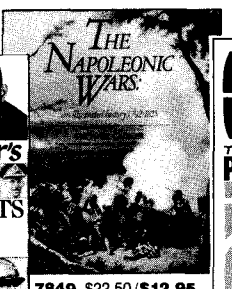

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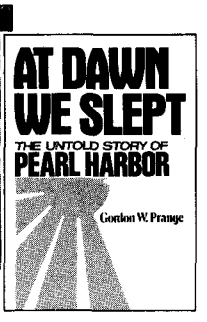

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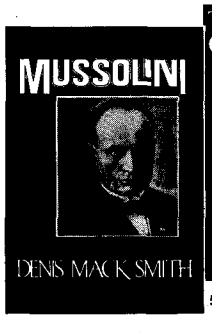

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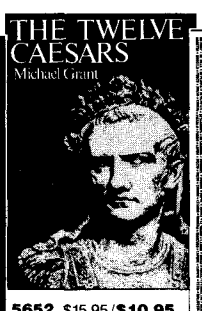

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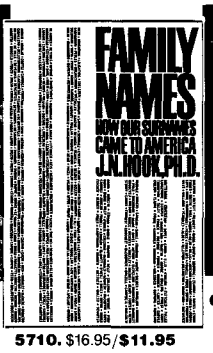

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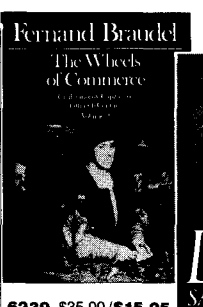

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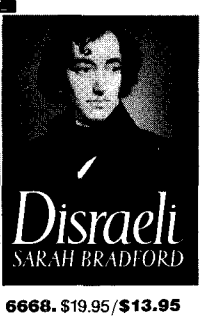

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> creasingly a conventional battle and less an insurgency. Because the people of the cities did not rise up against the foreigners and puppets at Tet—indeed they gave little support to the attack force—communist claim to a moral and political authority in South Viet Nam suffered a serious blow.

Or consider this quotation, from the authoritative *Strategic Survey—1969,* published by the Institute for Strategic Studies, London:

> The enormous losses incurred by North Vietnamese during their major offensives of February and May 1968 destroyed the elite of North Vietnam's army. That army showed little sign of recovery during 1969. They had been forced in 1968 to abandon much of their rural power base, in the form of territory under their control, in order to launch the assault upon the cities. That assault having failed, they found in retreat that their rural base . . . had begun to crumble.

That must do here for the authoritatively certified reality of the Tet offensive and its outcome. In every important respect—political and social as well as military—it represented a huge success for South Vietnamese and American soldiers. But let us now turn to the coverage of this victory in the United States—at the time, afterward, and even to this day in many instances. Instead of the victory that it actually was for us, it was perceived and broadcast by the media almost unfailingly as the "disaster in Vietnam." As Braestrup writes: "The generalized effect of the news media's contemporary output in February-March 1968 was a distortion of reality—through sins of omission and commission—on a scale that helped shape Tet's political repercussions in Washington and the Administration's response."

Distortion it was, to say the least. There are hundreds of pages in this book dealing relentlessly with just about every aspect of the distortion and every medium in which it flourished. Walter Cronkite, just back from a week in South Vietnam after the victory was assured, produced a now-notorious half-hour documentary in which the "reality" of the event was not our victory but our defeat. Cronkite's "reality" was one in which there were few losses by communist attackers; one in which most official reports by the American leaders in Saigon were derided; one in which Hue was treated as in total ruins, with refugees everywhere in panic; one in which pacification was seen as a total failure of the United States; and, finally, a picture of the Tet offensive so somber overall as to lead Cronkite to conclude pathetically that the best Americans and South Vietnamese could hope for was somehow to "salvage a measure of victory *from defeat*" (emphasis added).

There was a story in *Newsweek* (February 12, 1968) that asserted: "Westmoreland and his commanders were clearly caught short by the scope and intensity of the raids . . . And they *insisted* on reading the communists' objectives in strictly military—rather than political or psychological—terms. . . . In Hue and elsewhere last week the Vietcong showed that they could still be *devastatingly effective*" (emphasis added). Interestingly, *Time* early on provided a story in which reality prevailed, in which the devastating losses by the communists were emphasized. But, as Braestrup observes, *Time* did not thereafter publish that kind of story. It also joined in the general chorus of doom that the media formed—along with some highly placed Washington officials.

One more illustration must suffice, this one from the chief guru of American liberals, John Kenneth Galbraith. As his memoirs make clear, Galbraith considered himself an authority on Vietnam, indeed on all of Southeast Asia. Braestrup

LIBERAL CULTURE

New Atlantis

The years Shirley MacLaine has spent as an ardent leftist and fellow traveler appear to have prepared her well mentally for a new role: that of spiritualist, medium, and psychic. In a recent interview, Ms. MacLaine declared—with the same passion formerly reserved for the communist workers' paradises—that she was visited by actor Peter Sellers moments after he died: "I could *feel* Peter smile," she said, thus inducing a bit of confusion as to the character of the meeting. She also claimed that in one of her previous lives she lived and died in Atlantis. Averred this American beacon of thespian intellectuality:

> I remembered very clearly the feeling of living in Atlantis . . . I was a man, a great teacher . . . I couldn't stand the thought of drowning, so I killed myself.

Ms. MacLaine's metaphysical gammon will shortly roll off the presses in a book at a time when a troubled publishing industry is routinely rejecting works of scholarship, intelligence, and talent. Which can only mean that a certain island on the New York Bay has sunk even lower than the fabled isle of antiquity. □

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cites an Associated Press story, February 16, 1968, based upon an interview with Galbraith. The story begins:

> Professor John Kenneth Galbraith today predicted that important units of the South Vietnamese army will either disappear into the woods or join the Vietcong within the next months. 'It's been an open secret for a long while,' Galbraith said, 'that important units of the South Vietnamese forces up in the 1st Corps area or the 25th Division south of Saigon have a close working relationship with the Vietcong and will either disappear into the woods or join the Vietcong.' . . . Galbraith said his conclusion of imminent collapse of the South Vietnamese government and army is based on a 'careful reading' of the news accounts of the war.

Galbraith was President of the Americans for Democratic Action at that time; it can be assumed that a very large number of liberals in the U.S. felt confirmed in their "knowledge" that not only had Tet been a disaster for South Vietnam and the Americans but also that the true corruption and all-around wickedness of the South Vietnamese government was so bad that entire units of troops and numerous citizens alike were defecting to the Vietcong. Braestrup cites material from Edward J. Epstein that tells how, in late 1968, an NBC producer suggested to his chief that a three-part series be done on television showing that Tet had been a victory for the Americans and South Vietnamese. The suggestion was rejected because, said NBC to the producer, Tet was already established "in the public's mind as a defeat, and therefore it was a defeat." I have no doubt that similar experiences were suffered by many a newspaper reporter or subeditor.

It is unnecessary to cite further examples. The question now is: What is the explanation for the immense chasm that separated reality in South Vietnam from the false representation of it which seized nearly all of the U.S. media, leading them to declare defeat and disaster where, in fact, victory lay? Braestrup does not think that ideological forces had much to do with phenomenon—apart from the working press's general hostility toward President Johnson and some of his close advisers. He calls it "an extreme case," writing: "The special circumstances of Tet impacted to a rare degree on modern American journalism's special susceptibilities and limitations. This peculiar conjuncture overwhelmed reporters, commentators, and their superiors alike." He correctly points out that credibility of the Johnson Administration was extremely low in the media's opinion—and in that of the general public, for that matter—from about 1966 on. Johnson (who as Vice-President had been lukewarm toward any participation at all in Vietnam and was perhaps the only voice in opposition to U.S. participation in the coup that overturned Diem) became simply overwhelmed by the war. He doubtless sensed early that it was going to be a lethal blow to his aspiration to greatness as President. In any event, as Braestrup notes, Johnson's leadership as commander in chief was pretty much in shreds. Some of his press conferences and interviews on the war in Vietnam are almost nightmarish in retrospect. Such a President and the attendant condition of chaos in the White House made accurate reporting difficult for even the few really exceptional members of the media, both at home and in South Vietnam.

But, Braestrup declares, beyond Johnson's lack of candor and the confusion he disseminated lay signal inadequacies and failures on the part of the "media managers." These are the people in press and television who are the ultimate determiners of what is wanted, what is relevant, and what is actually printed or broadcast. In the end it was failure or willful refusal of the news managers at home that "brought down the curtain while the play was still going on." Disaster for the U.S. had been quickly assumed when Tet began, and no amount of contrary evidence proved capable of altering this assumption, this state of mind. Braestrup ends his book with a warning that the inadequacies of the media are with us still, the sorry tale of Tet notwithstanding, and "in view of all these factors, unsatisfactory performance in another surprise crisis or near-crisis appears likely." Braestrup has already, several times, been proved correct as a prophet —El Salvador, especially on television, being a special example.

I do not agree entirely with Braestrup's dismissal of the ideological factor in the press's coverage of Tet. Granted that in the field ideological considerations mattered little if at all once the Tet offensive began. But surely the "media managers" back home were, by 1968, exceedingly sensitive to ideological considerations. The revolutionary 1960's were already in full display. There is no question at all in my mind that the relentless and steadily mounting opposition to the war in Vietnam from the left—which included a substantial number of intellectuals and other opinion-makers as well as the thousands of students whose demonstrations and riots were the regular stuff of the evening news—had a great deal to do in shaping what the French call a *mentalité* among news managers as well as "managers" in the churches, the schools, and the universities. It is impossible to believe that the rather abject departure from government of the McNamaras, Bundys, Hillsmans, and Schlesingers had nothing to do with the rain of hatred and scorn that so many of America's best-known intellectuals, from New York to San Francisco, had been directing against these Presidential advisers since 1965. It is equally impossible to believe that the same rain of hate and scorn did not also affect media managers. Let's hope that in future U.S. military and political engagements (e.g., in Latin America) the media managers clean house a little beforehand. But no matter how clean they get their house, they (and we) should be warned that the same rain of hell fire that fell on their heads in the late 1960's from the political left is going to fall again, this time, perhaps, much more heavily. □

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A Dwarf as Giant

Pablo Neruda: *Passions and Impressions;* Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

by Mary Ellen Fox

How does one cope with the phenomenon of Pablo Neruda, Chilean poet and 1971 Nobel Prize winner? He is obviously considered a great poet by many —at least by those who have been overwhelmed by his neo-Whitmanesque effusions or by the so-called charm of his odes to socks, watermelons, salt, and other sundry items. Still others are enthralled by that facet of his poetry which can only be described as socialist-realist bombast and which includes a diatribe against the United Fruit Company and a paean to a shoveler in the nitrate mines.

However, it is not Neruda the poet but Neruda the political essayist and activist that is in question here, since *Passions and Impressions* is primarily a compendium of Neruda's positions both intellectual and emotional. Neruda was a fervent communist; the tenets of his faith are party-line orthodox in the extreme. He sounds *"plus Catholique que le Pape"* when he lashes out at "the agents of North American imperialism" such as Anaconda Copper and Bethlehem Steel, while describing Marx and Lenin as "a generation of extraordinary fathers of hope . . . [and] new leaders of love." Neruda believed that "political struggle is an integral part of poetry"; accordingly, his political commitments and contributions must be given equal weight with his poetry. The most charitable thing that can be said about his beliefs is that they are outrageously naive. This book is well named, since there appears to be a minimum of cerebration in it and a maximum of romantic feelings. With the idealized image of communism and the cold facts of history continuously on a collision course, Neruda jettisoned logic and objectivity without blinking an eye. After the trials and the purges, after the gulag, after Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and after an avalanche of revisionism to the point where the gospels and heresies of the moment couldn't be determined without a scorecard, Neruda blindly persisted in his faith. In the world view of most Latin American intellectuals, Marx and the State have replaced Christ and the Church. In a recent interview*, Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes explained such religious adherence to a new creed this way: "We are the sons of rigid ecclesiastic societies. This is the burden of Latin America—to go from one church to another, from Catholicism to Marxism, with all its dogma and ritual. This way we feel protected." But Neruda went even further than his fellow coreligionists in that he was one of the few who maintained absolute, unquestioning loyalty to Moscow throughout his life.

Even the Latin American clergy trade in the old faith for the new, improved model. Nicaragua's present Minister of Culture, a poet who is also a priest, describes his own road to Damascus*:

> It was like a second conversion. Before then, I saw myself as a revolutionary, but I had confused ideas. I was trying to find a third way, which was the Revolution of the Gospel, but then I saw that Cuba was the Gospel put into practice. And only when I converted to Marxism could I write religious poetry.

When confronted with such a remark, a believing Christian must hesitate between laughter and tears. This same schizophrenic reaction occurs after reading a speech of Neruda's from 1968 reprinted here as "My Burning Faith in Peace." Addressing an emissary from the U.S.S.R., Neruda honors him for "representing the greatest inspiration known to man. This inspiration is the existence and the persistence, the unparalleled triumphs, of the Soviet people and the great Revolution . . . that vast nation, governed by a classless society, invariably joins in every movement for peace and liberation manifested anywhere on our planet." There is still more: "We know that the Soviet Union is a formidable seedbed of modest but illustrious heroes. The world still thrills at the memory of its glorious defense of peace and liberty in crushing the threat of Hitler. Those were somber and bloody days, and humanity recognizes its immeasurable debt to the Soviets." Of course, we all know how that modest but illustrious hero Stalin single-handedly defeated Hitler. Neruda continues by decrying the United States as Hitler's heir:

> But, terrified, we ask ourselves whether such an unconceivable horror [as World War II] might again befall history. More recently, we have seen how peace, a peace so tragically obtained, has been betrayed. One state more powerful than the rest has carried death and destruction to lands far distant from its territory. With ferocious violence it has destroyed the cities, the cultivated fields, the buildings, and the lives of a small nation whose people, proud of their ancient culture, had only recently burst free from their colonial chains.

And Neruda goes on to describe the criminality of the U.S. actions in Vietnam, while comparing our "genocide" there with the murder of Martin Luther King. "He [King] was killed by abominable, seemingly powerful forces. From the unjust war in Korea to the disgraceful assault against the independence of Vietnam, these forces have been unleashed in North America as a poisonous by-product of war. It is in official violence that we must seek the origin of these crimes. Two wars have taught thousands of young men the practice of killing and

Dr. Fox's degree is in Spanish literature.

*"Revolution and the Intellectual in Latin America," *New York Times Magazine,* March 13, 1983.

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burning, and total disregard for human life. Racism, delinquency, perversion, and cruelty have been aggravated to such a degree among North Americans that a fearful mankind contemplates a retrogression to the primal laws of the jungle, to brutality and force." These passages, typical of Neruda's passionate impressions, adequately convey an idea of his meager mental abilities. Once again, one doesn't know if his biases are more comical than criminal. If anything, his cerebral gyrations bring to mind the time-honored principle of "Hottentot morality" so beautifully articulated by Edgar Rice Burroughs: "I kill you, good. You kill me, bad." Confronted with truth, facts, objective assessments, Neruda opts for primitive lusts and passions to evaluate and analyze events. The words Mexican poet and essayist Octavio Paz used to describe another, more recent Latin American Nobel Prize winner can be perfectly applied to Neruda as well: "Very few Latin American intellectuals of the left or the right have done much thinking. . . . They spout commonplaces. I don't reproach García Márquez for using his skill as a writer to defend his ideas. I reproach him because his ideas are poor . . . he repeats slogans."

It is thus necessary to wonder: Why were two Latin American Marxists, Pablo Neruda and Gabriel García Márquez, both political slogan-spouters, awarded the Nobel Prize? Can anyone imagine the committee awarding the Prize to these writers had their political affiliation been at the other end of the spectrum? Can anyone imagine the Prize going to Ezra Pound, a far more profound and fascinating poet than Neruda? Mention Pound's name in this context and the universal reaction is disbelief and horror. And this is the way it should be. Although certifiably insane, thus—by today's standards of sympathy for the deranged—given license to rant, Pound espoused ideas that were horrendous, damaging, and at variance with the ideas of a free society. We admit his literary value, but we certainly don't bestow honors on him. Yet the ideologies and affiliations of a Neruda or a García Márquez are, to my mind, no less iniquitous than those of an Ezra Pound. One must ask: How important is an artist's ideological commitment in judging his art? It is profoundly important, which is something that our society ignores. The impact of ideas has always been subordinated to the impact of deeds in the public consciousness. This must change if society is to continue to flourish as a community of free, rational, and responsible men and women. The artist must be held accountable for his ideas since "ideas have consequences" and the arm of art is long. To honor artists such as these while they live and participate in the social arena is to make them powerful role models. It is ironic that our society can perfectly comprehend *political* activism that is inimical to its well-being, but does not give enough weight to destructive ideas, and to those who propound them. These are ultimately the most deadly. Certainly, the artist has the right to express his views, something that Neruda was able to do as a citizen of the free world. (To imagine the Soviet dissident intellectual allowed to publish in the U.S.S.R. is a contradiction in terms.) We, society, maintain the right to refuse to reward those artists who publicize ideas the society believes destructive to it. Is the artist above and beyond the laws governing any other citizen? According to the Gospel of Mailer he is: the superannuated laddie from Brooklyn believes that "art is worth a little risk," and so Jack Abbott was unleashed on the population with lethal consequences. Yet, it must be stressed that we are not talking about *unpopular* or *nonconformist* ideas, but about those fanatic ideologies that have caused so much havoc and have defined our century: fascism, communism, nihilism, and terrorism—the modern horsemen of the apocalypse.

One of the most outstanding comical/tragic episodes in this volume underlines this very helplessness of our society to defend itself, an inability which develops into an active undermining of our own survival. In an article published in Caracas in 1947, Neruda refers to George Kennan as an agent of profascist imperialist reactionaries. In 1968, the same Mr. Kennan, at the time president of both the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the National Institute of Arts and Letters, wrote respectfully to Pablo Neruda informing him of his election to honorary membership in both organizations. As Kennan pointed out, "membership in the Academy and in the Institute is reserved . . . to artists, writers, and composers, not citizens of the United States, whose services in the arts are gratefully acknowledged by their colleagues in this Republic." Neruda wrote back refusing to receive the insignia and the citation of honorary membership

In the Mail

Political Economy and Freedom: A Collection of Essays **by G. Warren Nutter; Liberty Press; Indianapolis, IN.** Interesting observations by an economist who pointed out to his brethren that the economy worked better without them and who noted that means are more important than ends.

Mark Twain: Selected Writings of an American Skeptic **edited by Victor Doyno; Prometheus Books; Buffalo, NY.** Given the quality of the productions of contemporary American skeptics, *any* writings by Twain are welcome.

Screening Federal Employees: A Neglected Security Priority **by David Martin; Heritage Foundation; Washington, DC.** Indicates that it might be tougher to fill out a job application at a 7-11 Store than for the Federal government when it comes to matters of honesty and integrity.

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from the hands of any U.S. Ambassador or anyone representing the government. Kennan replied: "I understand and respect your feelings for not accepting the citation and insignia from our ambassador to Chile. This does not in any way negate your election. If you are planning to be in the United States any time in the near future it would be my pleasure to present the insignia and citation to you. If, however, you should be in another country . . . [such] as Mexico . . . I might be able to fly down to make the presentation to you there."

Can anyone imagine a parallel cultural group in the U.S.S.R. extending those honors to say, Arthur Koestler, and, with his refusal to accept them from the hands of any government official, having the president of the group fly to Sweden to bestow them personally? Not long ago I saw advertised a button that read: "Just because I have a Ph.D. doesn't mean I'm stupid." Perhaps another one should be manufactured for the Nerudas, the Kennans, et al., which would say: "Just because I'm an intellectual doesn't mean I have any sense." □

Rocking a Leaky Boat

Robert Scheer: *With Enough Shovels: Reagan, Bush and Nuclear War;* Random House; New York.

by Daniel J. O'Neil

There exists a formula that might be employed to destabilize virtually any political system. It can effectively undermine systems irrespective of ideological underpinning and can be utilized against regimes of left, center, and right orientation. Some contribute to the formula out of failure to appreciate man's propensity toward anarchy and the difficulty of maintaining an ordered society, others out of a desire to radically transform some target society. The formula involves both domestic and external ingredients that collectively form a pattern that might be termed the *destabilization syndrome.*

Domestically the device involves overloading the system. This is accomplished by making demands upon it that —given its history, culture, and available resources—it cannot possibly satisfy. One frequently employed technique is to command that the target society, irrespective of consequences, conform to the democratic model. Little credence is accorded the fact that, in terms of historical survey and comparative analysis, democracies are few and far between. Nor is there concern for the prerequisites shared by virtually all viable democracies. Instead, democracy is used as an absolute norm against which to condemn the target society and thus to deprive it of external support. (One wonders what the result of World War II would have been had Stalinist Russia been so critiqued.)

The current rendition of the democracy argument involves a selective intoxication with human rights. The target society must be unadulterated; considerations of tradition, order, domestic or foreign threats are irrelevant. There are absolutist demands for free elections, uncontrolled media, and tolerance of dissent. Anglo-American democracy must bloom in the Third World. Every infringement or imagined infringement of human rights must receive maximal attention; every rumored atrocity must be proclaimed. The probable end result is not the democratization of the target society, but a diminishing number of available allies and the weakening of authoritarian regimes in the face of the totalitarian threat.

Often the demand for human rights is made selectively, as demonstrated by the Latin American application. Many persons obsessed with human rights in Guatemala and El Salvador fail to demonstrate the slightest concern for the nonexistence of those rights in Cuba and Nicaragua. The numerous committees devoted to human rights in Latin America seldom provide literature or speakers critical of the two Marxist states. Indeed, there are thousands of Cuban and Nicaraguan refugees who could speak of the totalitarian reality, but they are not heard. Instead, the human-rights committees, while condemning American allies, provide public lectures by the perennial academic pilgrims who return to witness after the usual two weeks in "liberated" Cuba or Nicaragua. Cuba has forced into exile 10 percent of its population—a tragedy that would be akin to an American regime that would banish the entire black population. One would have to return to the 16th century for a Latin American parallel to this Cuban atrocity. Such a selective application of the human-rights norm suggests that systemic destabilization rather than human rights is the primary objective of many critics. Should a "legitimate" radical regime replace the "illegitimate" traditional one, the demand for order then becomes primary and the human-rights concerns subside: Who now talks about human rights in Vietnam?

A second domestic opportunity for destabilization relates to the potential for encouraging cultural conflict. Most contemporary societies are culturally pluralistic; seldom do the component entities attain the same levels of affluence —or productivity. Different cultures foster different approaches to work, discipline, responsibility; not all are supportive of the work ethos. Thus a culturally mixed society offers numerous opportunities for invidious comparison. Man apparently has an unlimited capacity to blame others for his own limitations; hence, it is no problem to implant in the minds of the less affluent groups a sense of exploitation. Charges of domestic colonialism coupled with excessive demands and counterdemands can be encouraged. (Both sides during World

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War I effectively employed the ethnic card against the oppositional empires.) The contemporary litany of racial/cultural conflicts—Northern Ireland, Lebanon, Cyprus, Nigeria, India—bespeaks the fragile nature of culturally segmented societies. The cement that binds such societies can easily disintegrate. Policies and demands that encourage ethnic chauvinism—the building of a nation within a nation—and promote ethnic divisiveness can contribute to that disintegration. Pluralistic societies are fragile by nature; a small amount of tampering can be devastating.

Immigration, which is not unrelated to cultural conflict, offers a rich vineyard of opportunity for purposes of destabilization. Controlled immigration adjusted to a society's resources and needs can be beneficial. Laissez-faire immigration, however, can contribute directly to destabilization. Marxist-Leninists recognize this and impose strict immigration-emigration controls wherever they are in power. Elsewhere they argue for laissez-faire immigration in the name of compassion. They demand open frontiers, present immigration as a human-rights question, and imply that there is some brutality in policing one's borders. Lest immigration contribute to destabilization, a society must ask some pertinent questions: (1) Are the immigrants motivated to be assimilated culturally; (2) What is the politics of their native land and what is their relationship to it; (3) What is their education level, given the obsolescence of unskilled labor in the industrial societies; and (4) Will they be likely to claim a preferred status based on ethnicity? It is conceivable that delinquent immigration enforcement could result in a nation within the nation —but it would be a nation inhabited by persons of limited skill, hailing from an area under hostile control, and claiming preferred treatment based on concessions previously granted due to domestic politics.

Ironically, many of the same Americans who urge preferred treatment based on ethnic claim also urge open borders—perhaps to increase the number of preferred claimants. Often the same people who assert that the unemployed want work but that the system has failed, proclaim that the "undocumented *workers*" are taking jobs no American wants. Often the same people who would tolerate Marxist-Leninist regimes in Central America would give us a large domestic population with ties to that world. Many people who bemoan the U.S. flag as a symbol of neocolonialism would recruit millions to live domestically under that flag. Psychologists will have to discern if such notions are the result of naiveté or self-loathing.

Another domestic destabilization opportunity relates to the productivity question. Every system must maintain a certain level of economic productivity to sustain popular support. Certain goods and services must be provided. Consequently, in revolutionary situations rebels often burn fields and destroy industries. In nonrevolutionary situations the approach can be more subtle. Productivity can be undermined in less obvious ways. The productive sector of the population can be demoralized and penalized. Insistence on equality of results can give productive and nonproductive persons similar rewards. This insistence, of course, is in the name of compassion and humanism, but the end result is destructive. Why discipline oneself and work toward excellence when the undisciplined or indolent reap the same rewards? What happens to productivity when the incentive structure is undermined? Government policy can be an especially effective weapon in an onslaught on productivity. It can foster policies that promote equality of result. It can sponsor reward systems based upon nonproductive criteria. It can expand its own bureaucratic web at the expense of a productive private sector. It can enact rules and regulations that make it difficult, if not impossible, for businesses to thrive and compete. The end result is a decline in the quantity and quality of goods and services. The productivity level declines and hostile critics blame the system. The goose that laid the golden egg is sacrificed, and the naive wait for new eggs to drop miraculously from the heavens.

The education of the young can be

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vital to destabilization. Every radical movement, as Plato observed, must confront the conservatism of the traditional family. Change in the deeply held values, beliefs, and loyalties of the present generation is unlikely. Often that generation is written off and the emphasis placed on its successor—the young. But the young must be removed from the influence of the traditional generation. Hence, through education, family influence is deemphasized and public authority stressed. Especially crucial is the teaching of history. History, by nature, is ubiquitous; there is something for everyone. Most national histories can be taught as exercises in continuity, patriotism, heroism, and opportunity or, contrariwise, as exercises in oppression, exploitation, and violence. The hostile will selectively parade the latter. The revisionist rendition of American history, for example, highlights Puritan intolerance, black slavery, Indian massacres, colonial expansionism, labor violence, McCarthyism, and Vietnam. Minimal attention is accorded the building of viable democratic institutions, providing sanctuary and opportunity for immigrants, pioneering unprecedented individual freedom and economic success. The young must be educated to question and scorn the patriotic myths that cement the society. Not all authority is to be questioned, of course, just selected segments. In the name of objectivity and compassion, the goal seems to be to inspire among the youth a loathing of their own culture and nation. The result is a suspicion of established authority and an unwillingness to be inconvenienced or to sacrifice for the community. The society is unworthy of defense.

National myths are also selectively disparaged. There are some patriotic myths that must be undermined, but there are others that must be entrusted to the holy of holies. One American myth temporarily supported by many critics of the American system is a bizarre notion about the American Constitution. This is the belief that elevates the U.S. Constitution to the place accorded by religious fundamentalists to the Bible. The Constitution is treated as if it contained specific solutions to all contemporary problems. Thus the Constitution has the answers to civil rights, affirmative action, busing, abortion, and all other topical concerns. Virtually all divisive, emotive questions are removed from the democratic arena and entrusted to the Supreme Court to conjure answers supposedly based on the 18th-century charter. Lawyers benefit from this myth for obvious reasons. Politicians gain too: by deferring to the judiciary they can avoid taking positions on controversial questions. The democratic process suffers, and eventually the electoral process seems to become an exercise in futility.

In addition to the domestic concern, the destabilization syndrome involves a foreign-policy ingredient that seems designed to weaken the target society in the face of its adversaries. It casts doubt on the competency of the defense establishment, contending that it has a faulty perception of reality. It suggests that the "military-industrial complex" is war-oriented, makes irrational and unlimited demands, and squanders vast sums that would be better spent on vital, necessary, humane social services. (Remember all the billions that were to be available for social services when the U.S. disengaged from Vietnam?) Defense seems to be the one area where a bureaucratic cut would be tolerated. The critic charges that the external threat is grossly exaggerated. The adversary state is pictured as conservative, pragmatic, and flexible, concerned only with its legitimate security needs. Its peccadilloes are usually provoked. It is suggested that the U.S.S.R., China, Vietnam, and Cuba would have

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles of Culture:*

Philosophy and Fashion

"One might think that philosophy would be relatively immune to fashion, focusing, one supposes, on eternal verities, or at least on timeless wisdom. Yet modern philosophers have been as subject to the imperatives of novelty as have those who determine the length of the skirt and the depth of the décolletage."

—from the Comment
by Lee Congdon

Also:

Opinions & Views—Commendables—In Focus
Perceptibles
Waste of Money—The American Proscenium
Screen—Art—Music—Correspondence
Liberal Culture—Journalism

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LIBERAL CULTURE

Prisoners of Passion

We read recently with speechless awe that, after a late-night showing of an X-rated movie had so aroused one prisoner that he sexually assaulted his cellmate, the authorities of Wisconsin's Waupun Correctional Facility banned the further use of such films at the institution. We were, and still are, uncertain whether pornographic movies should be included in the entertainment fare for young criminals forcibly isolated from society in a prison: the practice seems tantamount to driving lambs into a jungle full of starving tigers and then wondering why there's not a bone left. However, the announced ban has aroused feelings of deep sadness among American Civil Liberties Union lawyers, who are "quite concerned about the apparent infringement of the inmates' First Amendment rights" and are therefore threatening litigation to reverse the decision. Corrections Administrator Elmer Cady has not yet yielded to this pressure, though, because he is "concerned for the safety of Waupun staff, as well as inmates." We envision a solution which could satisfy the passions of all concerned: prison officials could provide all interested inmates with blue films; the ACLU could provide concerned lawyers as cellmates. □

developed in a social-democratic direction if not for Western errors, provocations, and interventions. Eventually, the same will be claimed for Nicaragua.

The critic also paints a vivid picture of the carnage of war. The most pessimistic scenario is presented: the next war will be unlimited; there will be no victors; civilization itself will end. There will be virtually no hope of survival, and the living will envy the dead. A modified rendition of this nuclear prediction can be used to undermine support for a conventional war. It involves presenting the battlefield without heroics—the stream of widows, fatherless children, the wounded, the dead. It involves focusing on the atrocities and barbarities that characterize all wars. Peace (like human rights endorsed abstractly by all) becomes the new obsession. The context, terms, and ramifications are irrelevant. The obsession with peace and the fear of nuclear war seldom lead to demands for reintroduction of the draft and a strengthening of conventional forces. War is an absolute evil and peace is the panacea. The interest served by this scenario goes unnoticed.

One problem that contributes to the vacuum of understanding of defense policies is ignorance. How can the layman begin to determine which missiles fill which need; the relative merits of ground, air, and submarine missiles; the ideal location of missiles; or how much is enough? How can he determine if nuclear war can be limited or evaluate the case for and against civil defense? Similarly, how can the layman divine the real objective of the adversary state or the reality of its threat to the domestic interests? The layman can, however, note a consistency and continuity in the rhetoric of persons who portray the domestic U.S. in the most disparaging terms, present totalitarianism sympathetically, contend that defense needs are minimal, and blame the U.S. disproportionately for international conflict.

Robert Scheer, ex-editor of the muckraking *Ramparts* and coauthor of one of the many Cuban travelogues, presents the typical peace polemic. It describes the U.S. as dominated by aging cold warriors who have shifted policy from a concern with preventing nuclear war to a preoccupation with fighting and winning. The adversary is presented as rational, flexible, and open to compromise. The expected picture of nuclear conflagration and the contempt for civil defense is rendered.

History provides many disreputable examples of regime destabilization. These should not obscure the fact that there are some political systems that need to be destabilized, that are so lacking in any pretense of justice that the just man has little alternative to resistance. To abjure totally and always the tools of destabilization is to aid the forces of oppression. Christian orthodoxy can be interpreted as sanctioning the just revolt, but a prerequisite must be concern for ramification: Will greater good than evil result from the exercise? And this is where the contemporary world suffers. So often the crusade proclaimed against an authoritarian regime ushers in a more oppressive totalitarian regime. Concerning the domestic American scene, it is obvious that to espouse liberal reform is not necessarily to contribute to system overload. Persons can favor human rights, affirmative action, liberalized immigration, social services, or progressive education without undermining the system. One can demonstrate concern for nuclear proliferation without defanging the national defense. It is the context, the timing, and the degree of the demand, its style and its probable ramifications which are significant. Especially important is finding that balance so appreciated by the ancient Greeks. For even the naive, well-intentioned person can contribute to the destabilization syndrome. □

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Pointless Performances and Other Exercises

Marie Rudisill with James C. Simmons: *Truman Capote: The Story of His Bizarre and Exotic Boyhood by an Aunt Who Helped Raise Him;* William Morrow; New York.

John Sack: *Fingerprint;* Random House; New York.

by Robert F. Geary

In simpler times biographies told the reader something, preferably significant, about their subjects' lives. Not so in 1983. Instead of answering questions, these two productions raise them; it is hard to discern what sort of books they are, harder and more depressing yet to ponder why either was published at all. *Truman Capote* purports to be a biography of the writer's early years, mostly from 1924 to 1931 when, at age seven, he left for New York. However, the book has little of value to say about Capote himself, being instead the stuff of gossip columns, TV talk-show interviews, and *People* magazine—dignified by photographs, hard covers, a $13 price tag, and a coauthor with a Ph.D. Even more strange is John Sack's *Fingerprint,* a diatribe against civilization disguised as a (selective) autobiography. Both books unwittingly testify to the erosion of standards of taste and, in Sack's case, of anything resembling good sense. In the "mainstream" culture a kind of inflation operates, blowing up gossipy essays into books. In the end, the price is higher than might be thought; for the Sovereign Self, puffing itself ever bigger, seeks the overthrow of more than mere genre decorums.

The subtitle of *Truman Capote* signals the scandal-sheet nature of the piece. Nor is the publisher slow to pick up on the marketing value of "bizarre" and "exotic," identifying Capote on the dust-cover as "a flamboyant eccentric and one of America's most celebrated writers . . . [who] makes headlines whenever he appears in public." Since Capote the writer has nearly evaporated into Capote the "celebrity," the "personality," that show-biz creature who is known for being known, it is perhaps with curious appropriateness that the book displays an analogous lack of substance, being less about Capote as a boy than about the history of the family in which he spent a good part of his first seven years, which is rendered through anecdotes. Capote has himself drawn extensively on his childhood experiences in Monroeville, Alabama, where he grew up—somewhat reclusive and verbally gifted—in a house full of women dominated by the formidable Jenny Faulk, a cousin who raised the family from poverty and supported a host of often-resentful relatives. So there is little here that is new. Nor was the family, whose history we learn through colorful though perhaps unreliable tales, especially exotic. Indeed, like much of the Southern material, its history seems never far from the stereotypical in its rise through Jenny (a Scarlett O'Hara figure) from impoverished cotton-growing to what appears its rapid lapse into helpless eccentricity (Truman's aged cousin "Sook" Faulk), ineffectuality (Bud, who wenches but does not work), or man-chasing and social climbing (Truman's mother). Only the black servants emerge with dignity, yet they too are familiar figures—lusty and wise, loyal and strong, stern yet warm. Apart from the sexual escapades of the family members, what is provided is a conventional enough portrait of small-town Southern life in an earlier era, a picture complete with the old boys lounging about the courthouse, heavy-drinking young men courting in fast cars, and KKK rallies. In what passes for serious reflection on all this, we receive, courtesy of Faulkner, the insight that Southerners "are a ghost-ridden people" haunted by a "burden from the past." As in the endless stories on, say, Jackie O. in the tabloids, there is finally less here than first meets the customer's eyes.

What merits the book has, such as the tales of Jenny's fearsome temper or the accounts of the folk customs of the blacks, fail to cancel the nasty tone of gossip permeating the book from the opening chapter where the author swipes at relatives who did not (and some who did) make the journey to New York in 1954 for the funeral of Capote's mother. Indeed, Capote himself appears as a spoiled child. In his first appearance in the book he is complaining that his mother should have waited a few days to take her fatal overdose so that he could return as scheduled from Europe. Mrs. Rudisill establishes herself vis-à-vis Capote as the voice of conscience and the concerned friend, advising him that life's meaning resides in something (unspecified) besides casual sex (to which he responds that sexual morality is best "left to the individual conscience"—a suspiciously trendy remark for 1954). Yet she withholds until the last page the information that Capote, cutting all ties to the South of his childhood, has for 15 years refused any contact with her. Could it be that the woman who appears

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throughout the book to be a lifelong confidante is settling one more score, this time at her subject's expense? Hence, perhaps, the real point of the epigraph from Psalm 55: "The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart."

By his own account John Sack is over 50 years of age: yet the mentality behind *Fingerprint* is that of a college student of, say, 1981, who is mesmerized by every cliché of the late (or high) 60's. An unwitting parody of the positions it so relentlessly advocates, *Fingerprint* bespeaks the faith of the Random House editors that the "counterculture" adolescents of a decade back will never grow up. Here is nearly every feature of the distinctively 60's mind-set—a blind hostility to technology extending even to reason itself, an egotistical and naive anarchy which sets the ever-innocent self against stupid and malign authorities, a ludicrous confusion of personal gripes and public concerns, and pseudoprofundities culminating in easy evasions. Perhaps unintentionally the best distillation of everything wrong with the attitudes so prevalent a decade back, Sack's slender volume manages to oversimplify even the simplifications of Theodore Roszak, Charles Reich, and the rest. Only the message of *Jonathan Livingston Seagull,* Sack's saving revelation—"you too can fly"—escapes parody, and that only because it is beneath parody.

Sack's method is to select a few events or scenes from stages of his life in illustration of his incessant thesis: since the 17th century, Western man has been on the road to annihilation through his pursuit of dehumanizing efficiency. Such a statement, however, fails to convey the peculiarly delirious tone of the book. For this only examples will suffice. In an early section Sack moves without pause from depicting his pathetic, driven father (a clutzy "efficiency expert" with a mania for boring holes in the walls of the family's modest home) to this hysterical vision of eco-apocalypse now:

> Oh Daddy, I don't think I'll get through the next twenty years of our mad arcadia. We have fifty thousand dangerous chemicals in America—it rains nitric acid in San Francisco and sulfuric acid in Washington . . . and the river caught fire in Cleveland. The nitric oxide in SST's, the freon (a million annual tons) in hair sprays, etcetera, the methane (a hundred million annual tons) in the farts of domestic cows—the contents of our cloud cuckoo-land turn the O_3 to O_2 and the ultraviolet light to the Angel of Death.

The entire book—clogged with arcane trivia and literary references—has this breathless, delirious style that never lets up. Again, after recounting a military snafu in the Korean conflict, Sack lambastes Hobbes and our Hobbesian civilization, then pronounces a remedy on the authority (always reliable) of an Eastern sage: abolish authorities and wars will vanish. Only the pristine Self will remain:

> Now hear me, America! I learned long ago and I've learned again, I mustn't indenture myself to any authorities but me, myself, my shadow, and I. So long live me! The most efficient ruler of me! Viva John Sack!

At the close the book reveals its essential frivolity. Having denounced the West as a civilization of Dr. Frankensteins, Rappaccinis, Strangeloves, and—of course—Lieutenant Calleys, Sack ends by quickly sidestepping the abyss into which he has spent the book telling us we are so determinedly plunging. With the usual barrage of references—this time to Vonnegut, Gandhi, Havelock Ellis, J. K. Galbraith, Thoreau, D. H. Lawrence, and Henry Adams (all in one paragraph)—the author assures us he is not really against technology so long as it does not make a slave of mankind. All the apocalyptic frenzy was, after all, just a pose. But Sack does follow his own logic, at least when doing so is convenient for ending the book. Intellect, he has maintained, is the real problem, and writing (especially when one must quote everything one has, presumably, ever read) is intellection; therefore, Sack decides to heed Wordsworth's advice to the young scholar to "quit your books." Sack will cease writing, even thinking, and have us join him in trusting instead not to any "high-hatted authority within or without ourselves, but [to] the instincts that tell us to eat, eliminate, and sleep." If only one could trust this true son of dullness to abide by his advice and devote his remaining years to sleep instead of hack social commentary. Alas, like his doomsday posturing, this too is likely to prove but the convenient pose of the hour.

Libraries will classify *Fingerprint* under 1) Civilization, Modern—20th

In the Mail

Now It Can Be Told: The Story of the Manhattan Project **by Leslie M. Groves; DaCapo Press; New York.** A reprint at a timely moment: the military man in charge of the project shows that those involved with nuclear weapons put their pants on one leg at a time, too.

The American Journal of Jurisprudence **(Vol. 27) edited by Robert E. Rodes and Charles E. Rice; University of Notre Dame; Notre Dame, IN.** "There is an order of goodness in the universe, and human knowledge can attain it." So opens the first essay, written by Gerhart Niemeyer. Clearly, there is more here than that which is in the exclusive domain of jurists.

Killing for Profit: The Social Organization of Felony Homicide **by Mary Lorenz Dietz; Nelson Hall; Chicago.** This sociologist from Detroit maintains that there is a perverse entrepreneurial spirit abounding. Detroit has been trying to get out of that business for years.

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century, 2) Conformity, and 3) Social Values. Ironically, the chief value it preaches is the now-fashionable abolition of all values that might impede the satisfaction of individual appetites. Yet it does not occur to people like John Sack that this chic, seemingly painless moral anarchy, if taken seriously by many for very long, will result in the chaotic war of each against all, the very state of nature posited by Hobbes, whose remedy for the reign of unbridled impulses—the iron laws of absolute power—makes Hobbes one of this book's archvillains. Such, however, is the blindness of the eternal spoiled children of a society wherein this sort of sophomoric narcissism achieves reputable expression. Today the trivia of the tabloid expands to become the material of the TV talk show and then, in turn, inflates to a "biography." With *Fingerprint* the balloon reaches the bursting point: the cry goes up against all civilization, even against books denouncing civilization. The work is indeed a commentary on our times, though not in the way its author intends. And perhaps libraries should stock it—as a collector's item in the intellectual shop of horrors we call, for short, the 60's, but which, as Sack reminds us, lives on as a chronic illness. □

Pernicious Pink Passages

Enrique Rueda: *The Homosexual Network: Private Lives and Public Policy;* Devin Adair; Old Greenwich, CT.

by Richard Peters

It has been said that Sigmund Freud and the Roman Catholic Church were in full agreement about only one thing, that homosexuality is a perversion. And that was said many years ago. More recently, as another of the remarkable fruits of the 60's, we were told to turn both reason and language inside out, and once again to stand on our intellectual heads. A new word, not found in the 1970 edition of *Webster's Unabridged,* has appeared: *homophobia.*

On the face of it, homophobia would appear to mean fear of man, or men, or mankind. Not so! It is used by the homosexual movement and its supporters to mean fear of homosexuality. This term is clearly and strongly pejorative, and it may carry either of two meanings: 1) either the homophobic individual is *sick,* phobic here having the clinical meaning of an unreasonable fear, i.e., anxiety attack, like fear of heights, elevators, closed-in spaces, and the like; or 2) it implies a more rational and reasonable fear, one that is born of false expectations. This second definition means "prejudice," which we have been assured is unreasonable, unconscionable, and responsible for many of the social ills of the world. Now we have arrived at the inversion of language and reason. A perversion, which used to be either a sin or an illness, certainly not normal behavior, has become an "alternative," i.e., normal, "lifestyle" or behavior; aversion to homosexuality is thus either an illness or a sin or both. The heterosexual majority is now *homophobic* and needs curing or retraining.

The above is an introduction to Father Rueda's excellent and thoroughly documented book on the homosexual movement. For the uninitiated, this work would be scarcely believable were it not for the painstaking documentation drawn from published sources, especially from the movement itself. For clinicians and others who are already familiar with homosexuals and the details of their daily lives and activities the book is still somewhat of a surprise. It is not the sexual information that will shock the sophisticated, but rather the militant orthodoxy of the movement's ideology and its systematic use of the tried-and-true techniques of leftist political persuasion. For some readers it will be yet another galling discovery that, as taxpayers, they are financing another alien subculture's attack on their value system and, worse, on their children's value system. Father Rueda's careful scholarship has provided a detailed description whose implications go far beyond the homosexual movement. What he provides is a textbook example of the technique for packaging and selling a group as a "repressed" or "disadvantaged" minority (Rueda points out that homosexuals are, on the average, wealthier than "straights"). The strategy and tactics for bringing that group into the service of the new left are clearly and at times exhaustively detailed. Father Rueda's book is essential for anyone who wants to know how it all works, and every responsible voter should know. The facts are grim, however, and this is not a book for Pollyannas. No point-by-point discussion is attempted here. Rather, certain topics raised by the book will be developed.

First, the pejorative use of the word *stereotype,* particularly as it pertains to "homophobia" needs examination. *Webster's* defines stereotypes as "having a fixed or conventional expression . . . character, mental pattern, etc., having no individuality." It is quite clear that a group cannot be a group without having certain distinguishing and shared characteristics. In the case of some groups, homosexuals among them, there is not only a set of distinguishing characteristics but an entire shared subculture as well, which includes language, preferred modes of dress, etc. With unknown individuals, one's best guess about their future behavior is based on whatever affiliations or memberships can be either recognized or inferred. Membership in one of the more-developed groups—a category that includes homosexuals—allows for a fairly high level of predictability compared to someone with no known affiliation. "But you can't judge

Dr. Peters is a practicing psychoanalyst.

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LIBERAL CULTURE

The Quest for Peace

In a recent *Time* article about cocaine use we read:

> The coke market is the same as the nuke-freeze market.

What new possibilities this suggests for the billion-dollar, Florida-based, blooming industry. A promotional idea: an offer of a free no-nukes T-shirt or bumper sticker with every 10-gram purchase might enhance sales. □

individuals by their group affiliations," it is said, and that is so. But it is only a partial truth. The whole truth is that, to the degree that the individual is a bona fide member of a given group, some predictions *can* be made and *should* be made. Furthermore, if predictions are made about several people belonging to that group the odds for being correct will go up sharply. Statistics tell us that the larger the sample, the more true to the expected pattern the predictions will be.

Consider all the decisions in life which must be made on the spur of the moment or, worse, when the people about whom decisions must be made are not interested in candor, and may even prefer deception. Anyone who has made the wrong choice knows how difficult, expensive, and interminable—if not impossible—it is to get rid of the wrong tenant, the wrong employee, *or the wrong person inside the house.* For this reason it is irresponsible to attempt to legislate away a person's need to stereotype others, and to force him to behave as if he didn't see the trouble coming. And yet this is what we are asked to do with regard to homosexuals. The fact that *as a group* they lead lives that are characterized by promiscuity—frequently conducted with people with whom they have the briefest of acquaintance, perhaps no more than the use of the next urinal—is to be ignored. The greatly increased likelihood that they, *as a group* will, because of their behavioral patterns, bring strangers into their homes, makes them and their premises much more likely to be involved in crimes. Their promiscuity and their sexual practices make them as much as 10 times more a health hazard than "straights." Despite all of that and much more, the straight majority is accused of stereotyping and hence is labeled "homophobic," i.e., sick or evil. And the homosexual movement is busy lobbying, with oodles of liberal help, for laws to punish people who are trying to keep a clear view of reality, in this case the reality of homosexuals *as a group.*

Let us move over (to the left) and examine the carrot-and-stick ideology of the movement. To begin with it is expressed in terms of *human rights, privacy, minority rights, discrimination, dignity,* and *freedom.* These code words are difficult to resist in their own right and are used to disguise the central concepts of this ideology; that is the carrot. The stick is *homophobia.* A single example of the use of such code words will suffice:

> An *enlightened* and *civilized* society must ultimately rid itself of its *prejudice* against homosexuals. The vast majority of homosexual men and women ask only to be accepted as *human beings,* and be allowed to *live their own lives free* from *persecution* and *discrimination* [emphasis added].

This is a plea for accepting homosexuals as another legitimate minority. What, however, is the outcome of such acceptance? Inevitably the same *legal* rights as are guaranteed to other recognized minorities will follow (indeed the above quotation comes directly from testimony given in behalf of prohomosexual bill H.R. 2074). Put into practice, such legislation will make it extraordinarily difficult: to protect children from recruitment or possible seduction by homosexual teachers; for families to avoid renting an upstairs apartment or part of their home to a "gay" couple who maintain an "open" relationship. Such ideas may sound farfetched; they are not. Thus, it is clear that liberal code words need to be examined carefully in terms of their actual consequences in real life, regardless of what group they refer to in any given version.

Perhaps the strongest of the movement's ideological positions is its anti-family stance: "The child should have the right to decide whom to live with, whether a lesbian mother or a gay father . . . a boy-lover, or someone else"; and "Insofar as it manifests a belief in the biological abilities of the female to nurture the young—abilities allegedly absent in the male of the species—the family, and religion, oppress young people." These from the mouth of a spokesman for NAMBLA (North American Man/Boy Lover Association). Apart from the obviously self-serving nature of the above statement of homosexual goals one can also discern one of the classic aims of the revolutionary left, the destruction of the traditional family unit. It is easily established that the homosexual movement is frequently involved in causes

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espoused by the new left—the more confrontational the better. Were the news media less inclined to present their material in such a way as to camouflage the more radical behavior of such groups, this would be self-evident.

Finally, consider the implications of legal status for homosexuals within the confines of the civil-rights movement itself. There will be freedom for "gays" to recruit, teach, and indoctrinate the youth of the country. This was already in the Gay Rights Plank of 1972. Further, the "rights" of children to have sex, i.e., to be exploited sexually, would be difficult to regulate at best; the NAMBLA position is that "the age of sexual consent is just one of the many ways in which adults impose their system of controls on children." The Eulenspiegel Society's creed states, "Our special concern is freedom for sexual minorities and particularly the rights of those whose sexuality embraces S/M or dominant/submissive fantasies and urges." Among the rights this creed asserts is: "The right to challenge established value systems which oppress by condemning and repressing sexual drives or practices of erotic minorities. . . . The right to publicize activities and views—freely . . . thereby raising the consciousness of both the public and ourselves." This is to be accomplished through "public forums and workshops on S/M . . . providing speakers for all forms of media, colleges, and other audiences." And individual groups within the broader homosexual movement have even more far-reaching goals. The following are the gist of amplifications of the Penal Code Revision sought by the Rene Guyon Society: anal intercourse is recommended for male and female children of age 4 "and sometimes sooner" with teenagers or older males; oral intercourse for male and female children is recommended at the same age with a "tiny child, teenager, or older male's penis" (we are told that this will put an "end to thumbsucking"); heterosexual intercourse is recommended for females of "10, 11, or 12" with a

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teenager or older male, and at any age earlier with a "tiny male's penis"; masturbation is to be unrestricted and is to be provided by "family, friends, or neighbors."

If such explicit recommendations are not enough to utterly destroy the traditional, and majority-held, value system of American culture, there is yet more to come. Of certainty would be the demands of other "sexual minorities." Indeed, we have been explicitly prepared for them by homosexuals' political aims. It would presumably begin with the exhibitionists and the voyeurs (peeping Toms). Their sexual preferences are easily construed as victimless crimes; it would certainly be no more work than turning homosexuality into normality and normality into homophobia. Now the door begins to open wider. If compulsive attraction to, and sexual behavior with, persons of the same sex is legitimatized and its adherents enshrined as an "oppressed minority"; if compulsive peeping or exhibiting is a person's only chance for full sexual gratification (and that didn't hurt anybody); and if we recognize the validity in all of that (one should never doubt the capacity of the new left to rationalize, even glorify these activities, and to find plenty of liberals to fall in line), then we must legitimatize exhibitionism and voyeurism, too. We have already been softened up for this on commercial television by a humorous family flasher.

There is a logical continuity here that has not been overlooked by the sexual liberationists. Following attempts to make an "oppressed minority" out of the semivictimless perversions will come compassion and concern for the child molester and the rapist. As good a case can be made for the compulsive nature of rape and child molestation as for the perversions: the rapist and/or child molester as oppressed. One might well ask: But what about the victims? The answer would be something like: Well maybe they weren't *really* victims anyway; maybe she invited rape by being bourgeois. And the Rene Guyon Society has assured us that children *want* these things to happen to them by the time they are three or four.

Homosexuals seldom describe themselves as revolutionary. But then Fidel Castro did not publicly call himself a communist either—at first. One illustration will suffice here (Father Rueda provides more): "People must deal with the chains that destroy us. Wrapped up in this sexist issue is the key to freedom. Contained within the bondage of sexism is racism and classicism, homophobia, and the rape and plunder of our earth." This is a quotation from a minister of one of the prohomosexual churches; it presents in the usual code words a whole catalog of new-left issues.

Ironically, all of the leftist bombast and energy being generated by the homosexual movement and its supporters are in the long run self-defeating. Gays may fail by succeeding, or, as it begins to look, they may fail by turning mainstream public opinion against themselves. The worst result would be if they were totally successful, however. Defeat would only leave them where they were: economically successful, mostly tolerated, sometimes famous, occasionally abused. But a radical-leftist victory would be disastrous: What then would become of the homosexuals? The answer is found in historical precedent: is there any country in which the leftist revolution has taken power and in which subsequently a homosexual lifestyle was given status, let alone financial support and guarantees of immunity? Such states are ascetic rather than pansexual, and no one but the state is going to educate their young *in anything*. When the homosexual movement has served its purpose, the revolution will devour it, along with all the other "useful idiots" in the West. □

Tinny Drum

John le Carré: *The Little Drummer Girl;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

by Rael Jean Isaac and Erich Isaac

Apart from the rare scathing review, *The Little Drummer Girl* has won wellnigh universal praise. In some respects the praise is deserved, for the novel moves at a brisker pace than most Le Carré novels while retaining their characteristic virtues: it is carefully plotted, well written, has a strong sense of place, and offers a credible portrait of the mechanisms of clandestine intelligence struggle. Le Carré abandons the British secret service for a subject more apt to excite current imaginations. The plot concerns the efforts of an Israeli secret-service team to stamp out a terrorist ring run by an elusive Palestinian named Khalil. The Israelis select a British Gentile girl, Charlie, and coach her as a penetration agent to be used as bait to eliminate the ring.

The novel suffers from Le Carré's weakness in characterization. He makes elaborate efforts with Charlie, his first female protagonist, but the end result is a mass of contradictions. Charlie is witty, talented, independent, compassionate, loyal, and honest; she is also so passive that she allows herself to be beaten by her lover and then, becoming infatuated with a new man, allows herself to be molded in a space of days into an agent for use against the Palestinians, with whose cause she identifies. Pliability notwithstanding, she is a liar who has created an entirely fictional past, blackening her father as an embezzler who went to jail to hide the fact she was kicked out of school for promiscuous behavior at a tender age. If Charlie is incredible, so is the decision of the supposedly brilliant Israeli spymaster, Kurtz,

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to use such politically and emotionally volatile material as the key in the plan to trap the terrorist ring. Still, Charlie is an improvement over Khalil: "He was broad-shouldered and sculptured, with the rarity of a special object kept from sight. He could not have walked into a restaurant without the talk dying round him, or walked out without leaving a kind of relief in his wake." Even Barbara Cartland might hesitate at this.

But *The Little Drummer Girl* is interesting principally because in it Le Carré carries forward—and moves beyond—the themes of his previous novels. Le Carré's protagonists are usually British and Soviet (or East European) agents and spymasters, whose similarity of methods and perspectives make them into mirror images of one another. In the Smiley novels, on which Le Carré's fame rests, Smiley eventually triumphs over Karla, his Soviet antagonist, but in the process becomes the mirror image of his enemy. A Soviet operative tells Smiley: "Twin citiers we used to say you were, you and Karla, two halves of the same apple." This is one of the few moments when Smiley is shaken out of his normal composure: "He was standing over her incensed by her cheap and unjust comparison, knowing that neither Karla's methods nor Karla's absolutism were his own." Yet later he sees the justice of the equation. Looking into the Karla file:

> He read all night, he hardly stirred. He read as far into his own past as into Karla's, and sometimes it seemed to him that the one life was merely the complement to the other.

Since Smiley has all along been aware that the values of loyalty and honor he defended had all but vanished in contemporary England (symbolized by his fidelity to his wife who routinely betrays him), one is tempted to formulate a Le Carré paradox. "There is nothing worth defending but those who defend it anyway will wind up sacrificing even the illusions that sustained them."

It is, to be sure, legitimate for a novelist to point out that there are similarities between people who fill similar roles. But by never exploring the differences between the systems Smiley and Karla represent, Le Carré conveys the impression that there is no difference between the governments for which they work or the societies they serve. Le Carré thus draws upon and feeds currents fashionable among liberals in the West who emphasize supposed correspondences and convergences between East and West, and insinuates to the reading public the idea that a determined enemy is no different from his prey.

"The book makes the reasons [for terrorism] understandable."
—*Newsweek*

"Literature is made from such stuff . . . . Le Carré writes this kind of thing better than anyone has ever done."
—Peter S. Prescott
Newsweek

"And his moral focus is interesting and provocative."
—William F. Buckley, Jr.
New York Times Book Review

On the surface *The Little Drummer Girl* seems to follow the same pattern. Le Carré applies his familiar mirror-imaging technique to his Israeli agents and Palestinian terrorists. "The house was beside a lake . . . Khalil drove past it twice before he turned into the drive, and his eyes as he scanned the roadside were Joseph's eyes, dark and purposeful and all-seeing." Later, Charlie watches Khalil: "And for a second, in the extremity of her tension, she imagined the mirror image of Joseph facing him."

But these suggestions of ambiguity and correspondence are deceptive, for Le Carré sets Israel up as the villain of this novel. He ignores the broader Arab-Israel conflict and confines his focus to Israel and the Palestinians—in Le Carré's portrait a military juggernaut against a helpless, dispossessed people. The bitterest attacks on Israel are from the mouths of Israelis (there are no mirror-imaging attacks on the Palestinian cause by Palestinian Arabs). For example, Joseph, the agent who "runs" Charlie, provides a long, emotional defense of the Palestinian cause. And it is an Israeli professor's wife who compares Zionism and nazism. "In the Golan, the beatings and the torture? On the West Bank, how they treat them, worse than the SS? . . . We couldn't stop the Nazis, now we can't stop ourselves." Both Joseph's speech and that of the professor's wife can be partially defended in terms of the novel's structure. (And it must be admitted that, while working on his book at Mishkenot Shaananim, the artist's quarter in Jerusalem, Le Carré probably met more than one person like the professor's wife. Particularly in academic and artistic circles in Israel, there are those who derive their sense of moral righteousness from castigating their society as utterly iniquitous.) But Le Carré serves as PLO propagandist well beyond the requirements of his plot. At the end of Joseph's long disquisition on the evils of Zionism, there is this:

> Then he laughed, not very nicely, reached for his glass, and raised it to her. 'Make a toast to me,' he ordered. 'Come. Lift your glass. History belongs to the winners . . .' Doubtfully she raised her own glass to him. 'To tiny, gallant Israel,' he said. 'To her amazing survival, thanks to an American subsidy of seven million dollars a day, and the entire might of the Pentagon dancing to her tune.'

This makes no sense except as anti-Israel propaganda. Le Carré's use of the profes-

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sor and his wife, the Minkels, is propagandistic because they are wholly implausible targets for an Arab terrorist. Khalil decides to eliminate Minkel because he fears the professor's moderation and willingness to acknowledge Palestinian rights will weaken Arab resolve by making it appear that the Israelis are ready to make concessions their leaders will not in fact make. But the real-life counterparts of Professor Minkel, like Matityahu Peled, Arie Eliav, Uri Avneri, and Amnon Kapeliuk are in no danger of assassination by the PLO—which is delighted with the embarrassment they cause the Israeli government. Those in danger of death (indeed, those who have regularly *met* death at the hands of PLO factional leaders) are those within the PLO's own ranks who give any hint of willingness to accommodate Israel's existence in any borders. The PLO's Issam Sartawi, gunned down at the meeting of the Socialist International in April 1983 by the Abu Nidal faction, is the most recent victim.

Le Carré employs meretricious techniques to make Israel appear guilty of the vicious practices that the PLO has made famous. Thus when Charlie goes for training in PLO camps in Lebanon, a village headman tells her that:

> the Zionists also dropped booby traps disguised as children's toys. He gave an order and a boy disappeared and returned with a battered racing car. He lifted off the casing and revealed wiring and explosives inside.

Repeatedly Le Carré implies that Israelis make children a deliberate target. Charlie participates in a march in which children demonstrate on a playing field in the camp. She notices aircraft and the bombs fall. No one is hurt this time, but Charlie knows why. "You bastards, she thought. You rotten, killing Zionist bastards. If I hadn't been here, you'd have bombed them to Kingdom Come." Even the Israeli spymaster Kurtz is horrified by his government. Kurtz is obviously modeled on his mysterious namesake in *Heart of Darkness,* for Le Carré draws attention to the parallel: "Others made laborious comparison with Joseph Conrad's hero." Like Conrad's figure, Kurtz is shown as a man of talent, intelligence, imagination, high principles—and utter ruthlessness. Throughout this book Kurtz is engaged in a race against time, trying to eliminate Khalil so as to prevent "those clowns in the Knesset and Defense" from launching all-out war. When Israeli forces move into Lebanon, Kurtz is crushed: "His body seemed to shrink to half its size, his Slav eyes lost all their sparkle, he looked his age, whatever that was, at last." Joseph is also "unable to come to terms with what was being done in the name of Zion." He asked himself what Israel was to become: "A Jewish homeland, or an ugly little Spartan state?"

While in his introduction Le Carré thanks Israeli friends for saving him from several grave solecisms, they did not rescue him from all of them. He cites a village close to Hebron as being attacked by the Israelis in 1948: "They made barrel bombs filled with petrol and explosives, and rolled them down the hill, setting fire to our women and children." Quite apart from the fact that such behavior was wholly foreign to the Israeli army, no villages near Hebron were attacked by Israeli forces in 1948. Within Hebron itself the entire Jewish community was massacred in 1929. The only Jewish settlements in the region were those of the Kfar Ezion bloc and these were destroyed by the Arabs in 1947. The only army that villagers in the Hebron area saw until 1967 was that of the Jordanian Arab Legion which entered with British permission before the termination of the Mandate.

In *The Little Drummer Girl* Le Carré has transcended the fashion that sees no difference of consequence between East and West; he has joined the still more fashionable ranks of those ranged *against* Western values and civilization. He has aligned himself with those who see virtue and vigor in the terror of "the weak" (usually backed in practice by the arms of the Soviet Union, whether in the Middle East, Central America, or elsewhere). That their targets may be representative democracy, the rule of law, and civil liberties is a matter of indifference. It is interesting in this light that, although part of the novel is set in Lebanon, there is no indication of what the PLO did to destroy the institutions of the one Arab country that most closely approximated Israel in its respect for Western values. Le Carré seems to disdain European anarchists, although he portrays them accurately enough as integral to Palestinian terrorist networks. To underscore his point, Le Carré has his highly sympathetic terrorist training chief Tayeh dismiss them as "scum." Presumably, for Le Carré, middle class and affluent, they lack the experience of suffering that makes identical activities by Palestinian terrorists justifiable.

Previously averse to press publicity, Le Carré has courted it for this novel, using the opportunity to serve as an advocate for the PLO. An interviewer for the *New York Times* (March 13, 1983) noted that Le Carré describes Arafat as a "witty, tragic hero" and is "enchanted with the PLO leader—his gaiety and moderation." In a June 1982 essay Le Carré speaks of Arafat with a schoolboy's adulation: "But all this was trivia beside the mobility and extreme swiftness of his perception; the brown eyes that stayed on you, reading you as he talked." Le Carré's view of the Palestinian world is romantic—and wholly inaccurate. In a *Washington Post* article last April Le Carré is quoted: "The huge majority of Palestinians are noncombatant victims. The curious thing is that the Palestinian struggle is in their hands and not in the hands of the fighters because, as with the Jews in their dispersal, it is up to the civilians to indicate how much they can take." It is hard to imagine anything further off the mark. The Palestinian Arabs are helpless pawns in the hands of those who claim to fight on their behalf; the most militant of the factions who claim to represent them has veto power over any possible compromise. Thus,

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when even Arafat wanted to come to some agreement with Hussein on the Reagan plan, he did not dare to do so. And, while Le Carré seems to find moral value in the suffering of Palestinians in contrast to what he calls the "self-indulgent dilemmas of affluent Western man," their plight is, in great part, the result of moral defects within Arab society which, with the exception of Jordan, has refused to integrate them, preserving the refugee camps as a weapon against Israel and as a tool in inter-Arab struggles for regional dominance.

On originally visiting the camps, Le Carré wrote that he "was astonished at my own simple perception: We have neglected entirely the Palestinian case." On the face of it, this is a remarkable statement. The United Nations continuously trumpets the Palestinian problem; more states maintain official relations with the PLO than with the state of Israel; and an unceasing barrage of propaganda emanates from "progressive" journals and groups in every Western country. So what must really bother Le Carré is that the ordinary person in Western countries has clung to a perception of numerous Arab states intent on destroying a small Jewish state, their efforts buttressed by the entire Moslem world and the Soviet bloc. Against them Israel stands in near-isolation, given support by the United States, but in a half-hearted manner, unlike that enjoyed by the Arabs in their campaign against her. Moreover, one with an unprejudiced eye clearly sees that the Israelis have maintained civilized standards of behavior, stubbornly refusing to become the mirror image of their enemies that intellectuals like Le Carré would dearly love them to be.

Le Carré has set out to undermine the common sense of the common man with what Alan Pryce-Jones aptly calls his "demonological" fiction, which will reach millions through paperback editions and sway millions more through the more powerful images of the film version now being prepared. □

Our Singular Tribe of Ben

Ronald W. Clark: *Benjamin Franklin;* Random House; New York.

by Otto J. Scott

It's no secret that there is something seriously wrong with the way American history is written and taught. To criticize Ronald W. Clark for a lack of candor in his biography of Benjamin Franklin is not, therefore, to single him out. One would expect Clark, as an Englishman, to be unsparing in his descriptions of Americans. That he is not is disappointing. Some honest truths about Franklin would enlarge general understanding about one of the smoothest, most dexterous and enigmatic figures among the Founding Fathers.

Unfortunately, Clark's vision of Franklin is clouded by the prevailing academic theories about the origins of the War of Independence (often miscalled a "Revolution") as propounded by such historians as Carl Becker and James Beard. These Marxist-oriented scholars considered economic motives (i.e., money) to be the root of the difficulties between the colonies and Britain. Relying upon such theories, Clark repeats the hoary stereotypes of modern sociology. This is not history, and it is not accurate. Clark would have done better to have looked into Carl Bridenbaugh's *Mitre and Sceptre* which traces the persistent campaign of the Church of England to expand its established, authoritative status into the colonies. Clark might also have looked into the works of Perry Miller, who (despite some distortions of Calvinist theology) provides a salutary corrective to myths of Puritan stupidity. According to Loraine Boettner, "At the time of the Independence, there were approximately 3,000,000 persons in the American colonies. Nine hundred thousand of these were of Scots-Irish origin, 600,000 were Puritan English and 400,000 were German or Dutch Reformed . . . the Thirty-nine Articles provided a Calvinistic tinge to the Episcopalians . . . two-thirds of the colonial population had been trained in the school of Calvin (and came to America not primarily for commercial gain or advantage, but because of deep religious conviction)." That is not to say that Christianity was completely homogeneous in the Colonies. But Calvinism was the *major* influence, affecting the 20,000 Catholics, as well as the Quakers, Jews, Arminians, and even the rationalists.

Mr. Scott is a frequent contributor to these pages.

Calvinist attitudes can be traced to Geneva, Scotland, and Holland. An early high point (inexplicably ignored by American contemporary "scholars") was *Vindicae Contra Tyrannos* (1579) followed by the Dutch Declaration of Independence (a forerunner of the later Declarations in the colonies, of which there were a number) of 1581. Still later, John Knox convinced the Scots that a ruler was a subject to the law and that it was the duty of Christians to rise against non-Christian or anti-Christian rulers. The examples to which the colonists looked were the Dutch Republic and Cromwell's Revolution. They did not agree with the Restoration (which sent many thousands in flight to America) nor with the "Glorious Revolution" that switched the divine right of kings to the divine right of Parliament. This assumption of authority was regarded as impious and blasphemous. That position was strengthened when Parliament enacted laws for the colonies without colonial representation. In first a theological and then a political sense, therefore, the churches of America lined up their congregations against the Crown and Parliament. This was so widespread and well understood a situation that when hostilities erupted, Horace Walpole told the House of Commons: "Cousin America has run off with a Presbyterian parson."

In the course of the war, colonial churches were targeted for destruction

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by the British. Ministers fought at Yorktown, and "all the colonels of the Colonial Army but one were Presbyterian elders," as were more than half of the colonial officers and soldiers. Clark does not even hint at any of this: he pretends that none of these issues ever existed. By placing Franklin in an imaginary setting, he profoundly distorts the period and makes Franklin seem both less interesting and less understandable than he was. Clark does admit that Cotton Mather, whom he calls "one of the most disagreeable characters in early American history," did exist, and that his *Essays to Do Good* influenced the young Franklin. But he does not describe the *Essays,* nor Franklin's later departure from the Calvinistic principles.

When Franklin's brother lost his printer's license, Ben's name was put forward as proprietor in a successful deception of the authorities. This does not make Clark blink, but it might warn the careful reader that Franklin was no saint. In time the brothers quarreled, and Ben left for Philadelphia. There, Franklin's rise was meteoric. He formed a happy and long-lived common-law union (though the mother of his son remains unknown). Franklin joined the first Masonic Lodge in the colonies and later became a Grand Master; in Paris he was inducted into the influential Nine Sisters Lodge. His career as a printer, bookseller, and journalist was phenomenal. *Poor Richard's Almanac* was only one of his best-sellers. Later he achieved international fame through his experiments with electricity and his invention of the lightning rod. He did not patent this or any other inventions, such as bifocals, saying that he had benefited from the inventions of others and did not believe in charging for his own. Wealthy at age 42, he did not need the money, but that should not detract from the generosity of the gesture.

Throughout his career, Franklin was a master of what Clark kindly calls "the contemporary spirit of genial misrepresentation when necessary." Since we are today familiar with the practice ad nauseam, it might be better to term it *lying.* In Franklin's hands, it was a fine art—and it was far from genial. Some of Franklin's false newspaper articles and literary "hoaxes" (in which he signed the names of other persons to outrageous letters and articles) ruined people. Clark admits that Franklin, now credited with 20 pseudonyms, might, in reality, have used twice that number.

Franklin achieved the highest colonial post possible: Deputy Postmaster-General. In that position he hired cousins, in-laws, and various relatives. As Clark says, this was a common practice at the time, but Franklin's nepotism was, and remains, unsurpassed. In 1757, Franklin was appointed colonial Agent for Pennsylvania and made his third Atlantic crossing to Britain. With the exception of a two-year break, he spent the next 17 years there, and became well known in English circles. (Although Clark does not mention it, Franklin also became a member of the notorious Hell-Fire Club, whose sexual orgies shocked even a licentious age.) At a time when each colony was separate, its Agent was a very important person—more important than Clark conveys. Franklin regularly sought more power. For example, he tried to become Agent of Massachusetts. However, his efforts were frustrated by Governor Hutchinson of Massachusetts. In revenge, Franklin released private letters Hutchinson had written years before and had them circulated with false descriptions, ruining Governor Hutchinson politically. When the Crown learned of his action, it cost Franklin his post as Deputy Postmaster-General. It may also have lost him some lucrative real-estate deals, although he had already received 20,000 acres in Nova Scotia from the Crown (for services Clark does not describe). Clark does say that Franklin was negotiating, with secret support, for 20,000,000 acres in the American West. He does not tell the reader that in the course of his real-estate deals Franklin used bribes, inaccurate prospectuses, forged petitions, Indian scares, secret codes, and other methods that, no matter what the times, were clearly dishonest. Nor does he relate that some of his contemporaries called Franklin "Dr. Doubleface," "Old Traitor Franklin," and the "Judas of Craven Street."

Clark does say that Franklin fought against a rupture between Britain and America "to the last minute of the last hour." But he describes neither Franklin's Europeanization nor its significance, though he mentions that on his first visit to Flanders Franklin was astonished at the lack of Sabbath observance. (In the American colonies even travel on the Sabbath could bring punishment.)

The major portion of Clark's biography is devoted to Franklin's period in Paris. He goes on at great length, and paints the elderly Franklin as supernally charming, benevolent, and wise. This is in keeping with legend. Unfortunately, it is not true. Cecil B. Currey, while still with the University of South Florida, wrote two books demolishing that myth: *Code Number 72,* and *Road to Revolution.* Both evoked an uproar in the left-leaning American Historical Association. Nevertheless, Currey rather conclusively proves that Franklin deliberately trapped and destroyed the reputation of his colleagues Arthur Lee and Silas Deane, and that he sought to ruin John Adams as well. Whether Franklin was a double agent remains shadowy, but that hypo-

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thesis has some credibility. Franklin played his cards in Paris so that, no matter which side won, Britain or America, Benjamin Franklin would not lose. That he essentially succeeded is a remarkable testament to a brilliant, worldly man. That he was capable of crime should not cause surprise: it was long ago observed that many shrewd criminals were men of genius. That he was a genius is, of course, incontrovertible. That he did, in the long run, elevate America and help to create the United States is true. Great credit is due to Franklin. To write the entire truth would not diminish that credit, but it would acknowledge that youthful poverty had given him an exaggerated idea of the value of wealth, that fondness for the other sex sometimes led him into folly. The admission of human defects need not make a great man an object of scorn. The duty of a biographer is to tell the truth and to make the virtues of fallible men clear to later generations. This Clark has failed to do. He chose, instead, to follow the mendacious path of the American academy, and in so doing wasted his opportunity. □

Strange Voices in America

Dennis E. Baron: *Grammar and Good Taste: Reforming the American Language;* Yale University Press; New Haven, CT.

Robert Pattison: *On Literacy: The Politics of the Word from Homer to the Age of Rock;* Oxford University Press; New York.

Stephen Arons: *Compelling Belief: The Culture of American Schooling;* New Press/McGraw-Hill; New York.

by Gordon M. Pradl

Most pronouncements about English and literacy today, however well-intentioned, end up producing muddle, not clarity and accuracy. For all the efforts to straighten out education and public discourse, our language and our citizens' command of it continue to be perceived by many as descending into a state of hopeless decay. In the face of bureaucrats, advertisers, and television, parents and teachers stand helpless to defend proper linguistic standards, and it is common to call the latter's competence into question. Yet despite 200 years of worry and jeremiads, our language continues to function, at times even giving birth to sanity and eloquence. So what is all the fuss about? We might well ask: What are the *real* issues being contested, and why has America been left with such an indelible legacy of linguistic insecurity?

Not surprisingly, power, authority, and social meaning underlie the debate. Because language is so intimately tied to our sense of self and our systems of values as well as to our perception of others, it is almost impossible to conceive of our words in terms of their purely communicative function. We speak and immediately reveal a wealth of information about ourselves—our social and geographical origins, our education, even perhaps our occupation and state of mind. Our words and how we use them represent our identity, out in the open for everyone to see. Only later is consideration given to our intended message. So, in a sense, the battle is a personal one—those worrying about their language are really worrying about their presentation of self, about what others will think.

Such individual social dramas, however, are always played out on a much larger stage, where linguistic markers serve to establish group membership. In this arena the stakes are high, for nothing less than "correct" behavior is being determined. Whose vision of reality and culture will dominate our lives? It is important to recognize our linguistic vulnerability: with such an investment in appearances, in sounding "right," we can easily leave substance behind. Any number of perversions can be justified when the normal lexicon has been taken over by those who would subvert our traditional system of meanings. *Freedom, justice, liberty, equality*—all these need precise definitions to which we can hold. Otherwise they can end up serving as anyone's slogans; yet from an individual vantage point these shifts seem to occur beyond our control. And sometimes we allow our words to be taken over by others and inevitably our actions follow in a similar pattern of betrayal.

Linguistic insecurity provides a fertile setting for those who would impose *their* definitions upon us. Common sense among the educated ought to prevail in matters of appropriate language use, but instead wrongheaded and artificial models of how a language works, changes, and is acquired have come to dominate our thinking. In *Grammar and Good Taste,* Dennis Baron traces the history of those who have taken it upon themselves to manage and reform the American language. Not surprisingly, it is a curious story, a chronicle of contradictory statements from the past (which continue to haunt the present) by the prominent and the not-so-prominent who would control our behavior by controlling our grammar.

The chauvinism of an emerging nation explains a number of the early proposals for altering our language. An English that was mutually coded and understood would form a common bond among all citizens and provide an important support for trade, commerce, and the development of participatory democratic institutions. Further, differentiations from the mother tongue in England, both in sound and form, were dramatic ways of demonstrating American patriotism and independence. The importance of language to social cohesion cannot be un-

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derestimated and so efforts to bring about uniformity, especially in the written code, have always reflected legitimate national interests. Yet given the diversity of speakers and writers (and printers) both then and today, it should be clear that such efforts have usually been futile. This reflects the fact that language is an organic part of the lives of people; as such, it changes from the inside through evolving clashes between innovation and tradition. The shape and direction of a language is not as easily dictated from the outside, though ironically, by assuming such a position, especially in relation to education, the language-reformers have had a significant impact.

How language issues have influenced pedagogy is what motivates Prof. Baron's scholarly efforts. The task of turning illiterate schoolchildren into readers and writers was of paramount importance in a land with an unrefined but quickly emerging civilization. Believing in mechanical, rote learning, it is not surprising that teachers concluded that memorizing the rules for grammar and spelling would be the most efficient method for this purpose. But seldom was any direct connection made between instruction and performance, as this 1849 testimony suggests: "We were *educated* at one of the best schools . . . but, although we studied English Grammar seven years and received a silver medal for our proficiency, we never wrote a sentence of English at school and never did anything which implied a suspicion on our part that grammar had anything to do with writing or conversation." Nor is the picture any more encouraging today.

Where linguistic change was possible, as in the case of spelling, all sorts of proposals were forthcoming. Each reformer argued that his system would help readers more easily recognize sound-letter correspondences; some even informed their audience of the resulting savings in paper and printer's ink. A number of "reforms" remain to this day, such as the replacement by Noah Webster of the British *our* endings with *or*. Unfortunately, however, both students and teachers lost sight of how these reforms reflected agreed-upon human conventions, not absolute categories and truths about language. Students learned instead that language study was a chore foisted upon them by insensitive pedants. But perhaps even more important, they learned to distrust their natural linguistic instincts. Baron asserts that the linguistic-pedagogical heritage in America has not been a healthy one:

> Even when grammarians claimed to be cataloguing the behavior of the best speakers and writers, or serving as transmitters and preservers of the language of the average American, their authority, and that of their predecessors, lent to grammar an air of the mystical. Students and teachers tended to approach the subject carefully and timidly, and their expectations of finding in the study of grammar a difficult and obscure doctrine that could not easily be connected to actual human discourse were often confirmed.

This theme is further elaborated by Robert Pattison in his lively but often exasperating *On Literacy*. Impatient with the dreary prose of his composition students, Pattison attacks education for its impoverished definition of literacy —namely identifying reading and writing with the literal decoding and encoding of spoken messages—because such education represents a threat to each citizen's basic autonomy. Beyond a mere mechanical skill, literacy, Pattison correctly argues, represents a "consciousness of the problems posed by language," but because we have become more interested in tradition than innovation, "literacy tests in our society stress the transfer of information, not thought." A scholar of English literature, Pattison frequently uses literary insights and speculation to further his arguments: "The clown is a literacy type, a recurring figure of the imagination. He returns age after age in various guises to remind audiences of their own literacy, for to laugh at the clown is to celebrate one's own consciousness of the problem of language." Pattison believes this consciousness or sensitivity to language is fundamental to any area of human inquiry. Words are central to our ongoing attempts to understand and criticize individual and social experience:

> The act of judgement, no matter how misguided or naive, is the first characteristic of literacy, and it precedes and embraces other forms of intelligence . . . literacy as I have defined it is a necessary condition for any of these other intellectual accomplishments. There can be no scientific knowledge without language to give it form; nor could there be any knowledge at all unless

In the Mail

***Social Justice and the Christian Church* by Ronald H. Nash; Mott Media; Milford, MI.** The author forcefully argues that compassion and concern for the poor must be balanced with reason and sense. In some circles, his approach is avant-garde.

***The York Plays* edited by Richard Beedle; Edward Arnold; Baltimore, MD.** Truly fitting (or, as it might have been put in 1463-1467, *mete*) for connoisseurs of Middle English Corpus Christi plays, as this is the first critical edition in nearly 100 years.

***Six Chapters from My Life "Downunder"* by Yang Jiang; available from University of Washington Press, Seattle.** A slim, potent indictment of the Chinese Cultural Revolution—from the inside. The translated title notwithstanding, the fiction is a complete work.

***The Poems of Hesiod* translated by R. M. Frazer; University of Oklahoma Press; Norman, OK.** Still admirable after all these years (approximately 2683 of them).

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> the knower makes some sort of judgment of the relation between the words of assertion and the part of the universe about which the assertion is made.

Current literacy education, Pattison maintains, risks severing this vital relation between assertion and universe. Unfortunately, his proposals to avoid that risk and much of his historical analysis are unpalatable because he advocates cultural relativism. He attacks the notion of literacy determinism: "Writing did not make the Greek mind skeptical, logical, historical, or democratic. Instead it furnished an opportunity for these predispositions to flourish. Well before Pericles or even Homer, the Greek-speaking peoples had developed a consciousness of language peculiar to themselves." Pattison would have us see that the real issues regarding literacy and consequently education have to do with habits of mind, not reflex responses.

Pattison's outrageous proposal to legitimize the vernacular needs some interpretation, since it appears to open the floodgates and thus loose upon us all the horrors of unthinking illiteracy. The proposal is offered, however, in the best of conservative traditions. Currently, the standard dialect of English regulates our thinking about form to such an extent that messages get homogenized, sanitized, and bureaucratized according to the latest lib-cultural guidelines. What students learn, provided they learn anything at all, is the supremacy of form—fit in, don't have ideas or originate thought. Our concern with grammar, then, manifests our preoccupation with surface things while substantive meanings slip further from our grasp. Pattison's hyperbole sometimes deflects his message, but his real efforts are directed at recovering the integrity of our individual human voices, identities we have lost in the midst of all those pressures to remove irony and pave over the discrepancies of our imperfect human condition:

> Aeschylus or Shakespeare or the student who reads them each has his own language. Why must they all be reduced to the common banality of correct usage? The liberation of the vernacular would also be the liberation of the classics, as it was in the Renaissance. I am suggesting a world where ordinary students learn Greek and Latin, read Shakespeare in his own words, and still keep their new literacy. The suggestion is only fantastic because we have become so mired in trivial questions of form and mechanical proficiency that we have forgotten where the strength of our culture lies.

Pattison, of course, acknowledges the need for linguistic standards, as does any sane man of letters. Without them the communicative center will not hold. Yet he does want us to be aware of how "standards of correctness" can create significant linguistic and educational tyrannies, tyrannies which for many of us have become almost invisible.

In *Compelling Belief,* Stephen Arons does not specifically deal with linguistic issues, but in many ways his analysis is the most helpful in getting to the heart of the breakdown of our agreed-upon social meanings, where form often wins out over essence. Setting out to examine three recent incidents of "corrosive, irreconcilable, and proliferating conflict between government and family"—censorship and curriculum control, parents educating their children at home, and government regulation of recently opened private schools—Arons ends up uncovering the more general struggle for meaning in our culture "between the forces of private dissent and the agents of public orthodoxy." At stake here are nothing less than our rights under the First Amendment, our rights to decide matters of belief as they relate to education or, more appropriately, "school socialization." What makes Arons's study significant is his sensitive analysis of events that are simply condemned by knee-jerk civil-libertarians. For instance, we would expect the censorship of the school libraries in Warsaw, Indiana, in the late 70's to be an occasion for all the high-sounding rhetoric surrounding freedom of ideas and expression. But what Arons demonstrates is how many schools have lost touch with their constituencies, establishing environments which parents feel alienate their children from dominant community values. Slogans attacking censorship ignore these deeper dislocations which result from the fact that schools, while fostering the illusion of neutrality, covertly teach an identifiable stance toward human experience. Arons elaborates:

> [T]he prevailing orthodoxy in most public schools is a negative one. There is order, but there is no community. Many schools are not simply moral vacuums, they are culturally confusing and devoid of significant shared values. Superficial parameters of behavior are imposed by the school bureaucracy in an effort to maintain control, while the possibility of generating real cohesion and meaning for families and teachers is systematically eliminated. For many students, acculturation in public schools is learning to abandon home or subculture values; to relate to others through roles and rules rather than as whole persons and community members; and to deny meanings, feelings, and intellect. . . . The essence of this chaotic and contradictory context for acculturation is negativism. This is among the most corrosive of all orthodoxies; but the law has yet to recognize its power.

The nightmarish ordeal of an Amherst, Massachusetts couple who planned a home-instruction curriculum for their eight-year-old son should also give pause. The parents won their legal battle in the courts, but not without stirring up much public controversy and greatly disrupting their family life. Arons asks: "Why is it that millions of children who are push-outs or dropouts amount to business as usual in the public schools, while one family educating a child at home becomes a major threat to universal public education and the survival of democracy?" In

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one sense what is at issue is the question of professional competence. Educators have carved out their own turf of expertise and tried to make the public insecure regarding matters of teaching and learning, yet because they are so involved in value transmission, they can never really set themselves beyond the nexus of the immediate meaning systems of the community. Arons ties this conflict to a deeper American dilemma:

> The family that seeks permission to educate its children at home has unearthed a longstanding contradiction in American society. A history of individual autonomy and independent action has been all but buried by the inevitable institutionalization of life functions; yet individualism remains a central part of American consciousness. The more the expectation of individual effectiveness and the ideology of individual dignity are touted, the less they are observed in social structure. The more the individual insists upon recognition, the more tense and uncomfortable institutional managers become about their inability to respond to that individual. The home-schooling family makes us conscious of this painful contradiction between ideology and practice.

Arons's revelations could certainly send a shock wave through many cozy school arrangements. Yet there will be no easy solutions to this contradiction at the center of all American experience. What matters is that we share in educational decisions and learn to base these decisions on what actually happens in school, not on some idealized notion of the nature of education. Arons provides a clear statement of that responsibility:

> The burden on dissent, which results from failure to make educational liberty available to all families, becomes heavier and more painful at a time in which cultural explanations are losing power, and people are more in need of open communication and the freedom to develop functional world views than they are of repressive enforcement of bureaucratic order or outworn orthodoxy. The question of educational choice is transformed by the times into the question of what structure of schooling is most likely to survive a cultural crisis, and least likely to undermine freedom of intellect and spirit.

In one sense we keep returning to the same issue: how can Americans assert their rightful voices without tearing apart the shared social fabric altogether? Today the danger lies in the direction of overly defined institutional control, whether in our language or our schools. Discussions of grammar and education have hardly ever been known for calm and deliberative reason. Yet in each area it is important to remember how easily legitimate authority can be abused, how we need to be vigilant in maintaining our share in the possibilities of ownership. □

Of Patriots & Patsies

John Chamberlain: *A Life with the Printed Word;* Regnery/Gateway; Chicago.

William Styron: *This Quiet Dust and Other Writings;* Random House; New York.

by Clyde Wilson

We have here two autobiographies of 20th-century men of letters. John Chamberlain looks back on 80 years, much of it spent near the pinnacle of national journalism. William Styron produces, through the collection of his nonfiction writings (essays, articles, reviews, introductions, speeches), what he acknowledges to be "a partial record of part of a life."

Chamberlain's recollections can be approached in several ways. First, as a record of the life and times of a major figure in American journalism. Chamberlain was a daily book reviewer for the *New York Times,* an editor of *Life* and *Fortune,* a columnist for the *Wall Street Journal,* a founding editor of *Freeman,* and the author of such significant books as *A Farewell to Reform, The American Stakes,* and *The Enterprising Americans.* Chamberlain's long career brought him into acquaintance with a vast cross section of American leadership. There were few major reporters, publishers, writers, activists, politicians, business giants, and celebrities that he did not know, and he has provided numerous memorable vignettes, particularly valuable for being turned out with a journalist's candid, knowing perspective and a gentleman's reserve and charity. On another level, his memoirs are a picture of the inner workings of the mediacracy, with which, as the before-mentioned résumé indicates, Chamberlain was very familiar. Though he does not make a great deal out of it, merely calmly recalling his own experiences, his account will be invaluable to future historians of this vast 20th-century stronghold of obscene wealth and irresponsible power.

Still another way *A Life with the Printed Word* can be taken is as one man's history of America from the 1920's to the 1980's, that one man being an observer who was strategically placed and who is reflective without being ideological. His judgments are poised, tempered by charity for the human fallibility of leaders, yet unabashed in their unfashionable conclusions. Chamberlain does not draw back from affirming that entrepreneurship and not government planning or leftist "reform" is responsible for American prosperity, nor from observing that communist manipulation of fellow travelers has repeatedly aborted a

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constructive American role in the world.

An aspect of Chamberlain's work that is most appealing is the portrait it gives of emergent American conservatism. The author moved from a kind of vague 1920's Progressivism to an old-fashioned libertarianism. The memoirs show the why and how. In the process many forgotten giants emerge—men and women who maintained their intellectual integrity through the political whirlwinds of the 1950's and 1960's. Chamberlain calls back to vivid recollection and due acknowledgment John Dos Passos, Whittaker Chambers, Leonard Read, Charles Lindbergh, Isabel Patterson, Albert Jay Nock, Garet Garrett, Frank Meyer, and a host of others who kept alive the independent mind of America at a time when to do so was to condemn oneself. And in telling the story he bestows honors eclectically and resists the too-common temptation to divide the conservative ranks into sheep ("our crowd") and goats (unfashionables).

Chamberlain came from a comfortable but not wealthy, securely but not aggressively WASP background. He cut his journalistic teeth in New York at just the right time, the 1920's. American taste was mass but not debased. The media were powerful but competitive and independent. They were still professional news-gatherers, tribunes of the people, not complacent partners in the ruling coalition. Journalism was still a genuine, if minor, branch of literature. His style and his view of the world reflect his background and training: clear, simple, direct, candid, restrained, charitable, lacking the smugness and killer instinct that are the distinguishing characteristics of contemporary reporters.

These qualities reflect not only an earlier day of journalism but also an important constituent part of American conservatism. Chamberlain represents an Eastern upper class sincerely devoted to the free market, not as a cover for economic piracy or hedonism but as a necessary condition of culture and achievement. He represents that remnant of the American establishment of the early 20th century that has not capitulated to the zeitgeist of recent decades. Chamberlain's variety of conservatism is a rather small part of American conservatism. It is not identical with the ideology of Catholics or Southerners, Midwestern entrepreneurs, Western farmers,

guardians of high culture and tradition, or embattled common folk. But in terms of its impact, it is a major force. One can see in Ronald Reagan, along with traces of other strains, the deep imprint of this particular variety of conservatism—honorable, principled, genuinely committed to freedom (in contradistinction to the liberal, who has sophistically redefined freedom to mean only an open road toward specified goals). Chamberlain shows us the roots of that kind of conservatism and how it evolved through Depression, New Deal, and global war.

The memoirs are disappointing, however, in their lack of deep political reflection. The author takes individual mediacrats to task for their intellectual and moral failures. He can portray, for instance, how the crotchet of one man (Henry Luce) could turn an opportunistic nonentity (Wendell Wilkie) into a Presidential nominee; or how the ambition of one man (Herbert Matthews) helped to consolidate a communist coup in Cuba. Chamberlain could have reflected on the *systemic* causes and consequences of such perversions of the democratic process, but he remains at the surface of things. But Chamberlain is a venerable veteran of many battles. It is right that he be allowed to recount his old skirmishes and recall his old comrades without having to rejustify the bill of particulars in the declaration of war.

The materials in *This Quiet Dust and Other Writings,* collected from between 1953 and 1982, though ordered by neither logic nor chronology, constitute an autobiographical account of William Styron's experiences and ideas. They also present Styron's direct political and social polemics rather than his indirect artistic commentary. The picture that emerges of Styron as social and political commentator is that of a Virginian, sprung of what once would have been referred to as "good stock" and blessed with not-inconsiderable literary gifts, who caters to the tastes of the New York intellectual community. At the same time, with a kind of aristocratic capriciousness, he occasionally flaunts his refusal to be absorbed completely by that community.

To grow up and find a place in the world is difficult. It is more onerous for the intelligent and sensitive youth who feels the urge to create and express, to make his way as a writer. The greater the intelligence, the more authentic the desire, the harder the way is in an age when the path to cultural success is strewn with commercial barriers and ideological land mines. The plausible, the adaptable, and the opportunistic can quickly find the way to preferment, while those who bear the genuine burden of the gods approach awestruck and encumbered. Make the young person a Southerner and the difficulty is multiplied. Even if he is as pliant and ambitious as a PR man or a ward heeler, there is probably something in his experience that will put him out of step. And there will certainly be something in the reaction of the gatekeepers of the great world of cultural success that will add obstacles to his approach. The Southerner's insight may be no more profound than others; but it

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will be in some indefinable but real sense sadder, less exuberant. He will find himself both inwardly and outwardly a negative reference point, a counterversion of the American impulse.

Several strategies can be taken by the Southern writer who aims to succeed. One is to be so good that the world must meet him on his own terms. Another is to adopt an adversarial posture. Both of these approaches are very difficult, perhaps too tough, for the pedestrian writer. However, those who take up the challenge often reap benefits. The pain and effort involved may enhance the vision that the writer brings to his work, enabling him to fulfill the burden of his creative urge in a high manner.

One other strategy is possible. The writer can go over to the enemy with the zeal of a convert. Confirm with firsthand testimony the truth of all of the enemy's conclusions about his own folk. In this approach, liability can be turned into an asset. One can mouth the accepted clichés with an exotic panache. Liberals like nothing better than to have all the angels on their side, to co-opt both sides of the argument. Consequently, in the 1960's there was a spate of books by liberals attempting to prove that "true conservatives" agreed with liberals about everything important. People who disagreed with liberals could only be pseudoconservatives. What could be more reassuring to the intellectuals of New York than to know that all "good Southerners" agree with them about the South and nearly everything else?

Thus Styron. Or at least, so we can dispose of Styron the political and social commentator, though I confess to be a little less sure about Styron the artist. One of his pieces herein is a defense of the license of the historical novelist. In a kind of reply to both the militant black and the academic critics of *The Confessions of Nat Turner* he argues eloquently and convincingly that the novelist should not be too tightly bound to literal historical fact, that it is his duty to find new meaning in historical events by applying imaginative vision to them. Quite true. The problem is that what Styron finds in history is not a new meaning but a liberal convention. The paucity of his artistic vision is evident when *The Confessions of Nat Turner* is compared to Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* or Andrew Lytle's *Velvet Horn.* Faulkner and Lytle convey a sense of history and a moral vision of majesty and complexity. Styron's history is flat and his morality is superficial. Could it be that the too-easy accommodation Styron has made between the New York intelligentsia and his real self has forestalled his highest development as a writer, deprived him of the profounder vision that others have achieved with perhaps no greater gifts?

"[Styron's] heart is usually in the right place."

—*New York Times Book Review*

The substitution of narrow, fashionably politicized views in *This Quiet Dust and Other Writings* is compounded by the fact that here he obviously aspires to be seen as a social and political thinker. The subjects are typically conventional and the conclusions crafted to guarantee predictable responses. Few writers have run the gamut of fashion so wide and so well: blacks, Southern guilt, the Holocaust, the military, environmental pollution, the 1968 Chicago riots, "Lollipops" (the title of one section of his book, referring to prematurely despoiled young women), capital punishment, Christlike felons suffering from a bad environment and a callous public, the tawdriness of everything American, normal, and average.

It is not so much the conventionality of his subject matter that palls as the conventionality of his response to it. Styron's mastery of language does not redeem the flatness of his perception. He is at his best when his vision is not strained through the filter of fashion. His pieces on other writers (e.g., Fitzgerald and Thomas Wolfe) are shrewd, sincere, and often generous. When he doesn't attempt to make social judgments he can be eloquent and moving, as in his description of his native Tidewater. And in his musings on war he makes one of his occasional dissents from liberal shibboleth. He eschews, if I understand him correctly, a blanket condemnation of the American military, accepts the inevitability of wars, and insists on adherence to old-fashioned codes of civilized warfare. But then one remembers that these occasional dissents are only a kind of spice to dress up the blandness of the fare, idiosyncratic personal gestures that in no way compromise ideological conformity.

Faulkner drew on the vestigial aristocratic aloofness of his Southern background for a catholic magnanimity to humanity; Styron uses it for purposes merely cavalier and self-indulgent. Nowhere is this self-indulgence more evident than in the author's flirtation with the criminal, which he recounts at length and candidly in a section entitled "Victims." The "victims," of course, are the perpetrators, not the objects of criminal acts. Styron and George F. Will led a successful movement to save a confessed murderer from execution by the State of Connecticut. Some years later, when this individual was about to be paroled into Styron's care, he escaped prison, kidnapped and raped a suburban housewife, and terrorized three children. Styron admits that he was glad it was not his daughter who was raped, but declares that he feels no guilt for his role in the matter. His special vision of service to the oppressed and neglected and redeemable criminal cannot be deflected by the sufferings of a few accidental victims.

However, Styron's self-examinations on crime and punishment can be candid, deeply probing, and they sometimes contain a redeeming remnant of Christian compassion. What they lack is the great artist's (and the great believer's) *encompassing* compassion. Ultimately there is an irresponsible moral posture that takes up the criminal out of disdain

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for the ordinary. Witness this description of two policemen: neither "are vicious men; they are merely undiscerningly obedient, totally devoid of that flexibility of mind we call imagination." Styron is less a chronicler of human suffering and injustice than he is one of a band of self-anointed nobles whose mission is to thwart an America that, in their eyes, routinely oppresses the weak, convicts the innocent, cheats, swindles, pollutes, and wages war. Styron and his readers see themselves as lifted above that mundane run of humanity who think that murderers should be punished, who sense that to excuse a criminal because of a bad environment is an injustice to every person who has surmounted a bad environment without wielding a bludgeon on a helpless victim. □

The Moral Posture of Defense

Thomas G. Foxworth and Michael J. Laurence: *Passengers;* Doubleday; New York.

Loup Durand: *The Angkor Massacre;* William Morrow; New York.

by Fred West

These two novels turn on the same pivot: greed, if lust for power can be considered a form of greed. *Passengers* represents corporate acquisitiveness at its worst; *The Angkor Massacre* represents the thrust for political power at its most despicable. The malevolent forces in each spill over national boundaries, and the methods employed overlap.

Passengers is well named, the clear implication being that we mere citizens are simply along for the ride as powerful corporations engage in a brutal race, an astronomically expensive race for which we, the passengers, pay. The theme is blue-sky clear: the robber barons ride again, bullying and murdering the peasants and bushwhacking fellow barons while battling for dominance. While the story is slickly written, the message is the main purpose here, not literary artistry. It is not as much a novel as it is a polemic.

From early colonial days Americans have been tradesmen. Commerce with the Indians was far more important than slaughtering them and taking their lands —at least in the beginning. This pioneering drive imbued with the capitalistic profit motive developed America into the greatest nation on earth. But in that process, we are warned by these novelists, perhaps America has lost her soul. We are faced with the critical question: At what point do constructive ambition and enterprise degenerate into destructive greed and exploitation?

What's good for General Motors is good for America, said Charles Wilson. Up to a point he was correct. A corporate tycoon in *Passengers* says (albeit ungramatically): "All of us are pulling for the state of this country and even whether there'll be a country if our position in the marketplace slips any further." Industrial might won World Wars I and II, just as it provided a superior standard of living for millions of people. Thus, patriotism was—and still is—often equated with American industry. As another character in *Passengers* says: "There's a war going on, an economic war . . . as deadly for some people as World War Two." And so industry is also equated with war, not merely competition. The authors of *Passengers* go to extremes to stress this: heads are literally chopped off; men are driven to suicide; foreign governments are coerced.

This whole economic, ethical, and spiritual problem is epitomized in the current defense buildup involving giant industries, politicians, and ties with certain foreign governments. In the face of undeniable Soviet imperialism which threatens not just Europe, Asia, and Africa but even our own heretofore sacrosanct shores, the President has called for an awesome rearmament program. Human nature being what it is, there will always be profiteers who exploit such programs to their own personal ends. But when such greed becomes a predominant force in a program concerning our national safety, then there is really trouble. While most Americans to the right of Jane Fonda acknowledge that the Russian bear is indeed a real threat, they are widely divided on just how critical a threat it is and how much firepower is necessary to resist it. Even the President has fallen into the pattern of proclaiming that x billion dollars must be appropriated at once for defense or the nation will be lost. Only by throwing dollars via the Pentagon into the coffers of our huge industries can we be saved. The problem is not so simple.

A great number of very patriotic Americans, including veterans of recent wars, feel themselves shoved into the corral with the bad guys because they entertain doubts about the "how" of the rearmament program. Irrefutable evidence has built up for years of skulduggery and inefficiency in our overall military program, from top-heavy brass to extravagant cost overruns to shady procurement systems to less-than-the-best matériel. That being so, many staunch, defense-minded Americans believe that cutting fat and reforming the system is a far more effective strategy than simply throwing more dollars into the present system. As Navy Secretary John Lehman said: "Get rid of those 6000 bureaucrats in the office of the Secretary of Defense and save 20 percent of Pentagon's budget."

Perhaps the President knows that he couldn't make the desired changes even if he wanted to. Reagan doesn't prevail when economy-minded ax-swingers go into action. When Proposition 13 reduced government income in California, the threatened politicians and bureaucrats immediately yelled that police and

Dr. West lived in Vietnam for two years.

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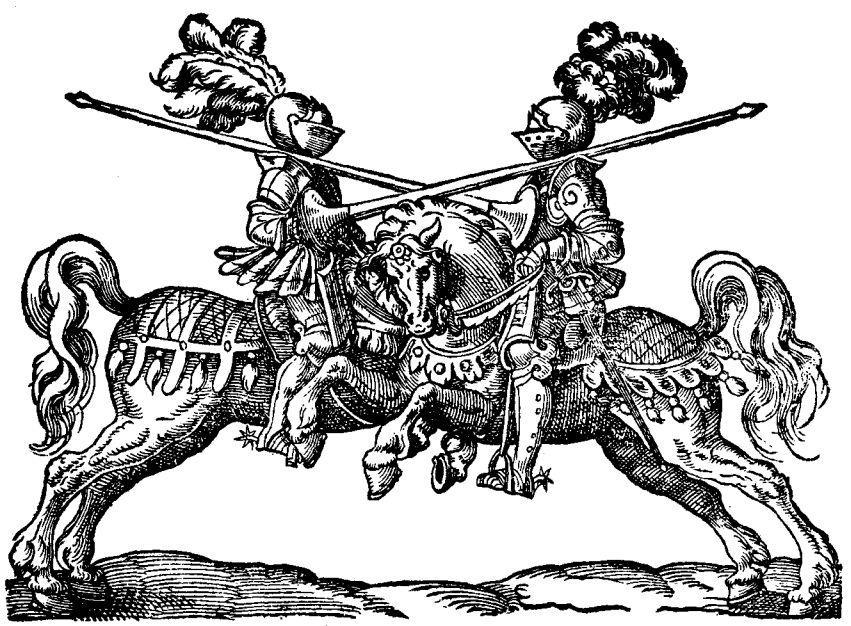
fire protection would suffer first. Senator Sam Nunn of the Armed Services Committee said essentially the same thing on a television news program. When a participant asked him about cutting the huge military budget, Nunn replied: "We'll probably cut the wrong things." Nunn went on to admit that members of Congress have their "obligations" to certain industries in their own districts. Commitments are as strong as the political support behind them, and they are prime factors that every Congressman considers when legislating defense bills and programs. Efficiency, safety, economy come second or last.

Passengers unravels the machinations of a huge aircraft corporation to cover up a deadly flaw in its latest passenger jumbo and in its military fighter plane rather than ground the planes and repair the weakness. Billions of dollars are at stake, as well as the leading position of the corporation. Aiding in the cover-up are movers and shakers of industry, government, and safety-regulation agencies, and hired assassins. Even as he is about to be exposed, the head of the corporation goes with supreme cynicism to Congress to ask for a huge loan—in the name of patriotism. When the Light Brigade charged into disaster, it was because of upper-echelon stupidity; when the huge jetliner crashed, it was because of upper-echelon greed.

In *The Angkor Massacre* fact and fiction are skillfully entwined. It is the fact of Cambodia, however, not the fiction, which deeply concerns the United States right now. Durand, a French author, lived in Cambodia for several years. He was able to scrutinize the political and cultural realities without losing his objectivity as a trained observer. Of course, he makes the expected Gallic jabs at the CIA covert and not-so-covert participation in the development of the tragedy, but he doesn't lay the blame for it at our doorstep. He concedes that trouble in Indochina did not begin with our entry into that area after the fall of Dien Bien Phu.

The roots of conflict in Southeast Asia go deep, touching legendary Funan and Champa. The first Americans in Vietnam in the mid-1950's found the natives to be a gentle, courteous, almost obsequious people. Not one American out of a hundred arriving in Vietnam had a solid understanding of the culture dictating this facade of peacefulness. Actually, Indochina comprises a large number of different peoples, most of them claiming to be "the" true indigenes, and nearly all of them extremely warlike, as later events proved. A close look at the history of Asia would have forewarned Americans of this fact. The Moi (a Vietnamese word meaning "savage" or "barbarian") wander from Vietnam to Cambodia (now Kampuchea) disdaining national boundaries, practicing primitive slash-and-burn agriculture in the mountain areas. Like the American Indians, the Moi comprise different tribes. Many of them aided the American troops during the 60's and early 70's. Naturally, the communist forces now in command in Vietnam show them no mercy. Remnants of other ancient cultures, such as the Cham, still inhabit Indochina, harboring fragments of racial memories and hatreds. The Chinese maintain claims. Into this time-seasoned bouillabaisse the French colonials were only a recent ingredient, and the Americans barely a condiment. But we hurt ourselves badly in our relatively brief intervention; we may yet be hurt even more.



We are always enjoined to learn from history. But what are we to learn? Only now are our veterans of the Vietnam War being given the respect that once went automatically to American veterans. Only now are some of the early vocal critics of our Vietnam adventure beginning to admit that perhaps the whole thing wasn't a gigantic con game perpetrated by the military-industrial complex, that perhaps communist-besieged South Vietnam truly deserved our aid. More important, the much-derided domino theory is still being substantiated. North Vietnam, supported by Russia, has now conquered South Vietnam, Laos, and most of Cambodia. As of mid-1983, the borders of Thailand were being violated, and the U.S. has had to increase arms deliveries to that country.

Since 1970, well over four million people have been killed in Cambodia. In some respects it is like mobsters fighting among themselves. However, if it were

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that simple, the best policy for us would simply be hands-off: let them slaughter each other. But it isn't that simple, and here the information packed into Durand's novel is valuable. The confusion in Cambodia may be epitomized by the contradictory title of the early youth movement sponsored by Prince Sihanouk: The Khmer Royal Socialist Youth. Under that monarch corruption and greed were a way of life, as he did a tightrope dance of diplomacy to maintain his position of power, keeping vying factions lulled or satisfied while maintaining cordial relations with Peking, Moscow, and Paris. But when he allowed Cambodia to become a sanctuary for the Vietcong, U.S.-supported South Vietnam invaded Cambodia and the prince was deposed. The U.S. helped install Lon Nol as the new head of state; he was supposed to be the good guy, fighting both the Vietcong and the equally villainous Khmer Rouge, a communist guerrilla movement of "indigenes." Russia supported the Vietnamese communists, China supported the Khmer Rouge, and the U.S. supported Lon Nol. Each group tried to outdo the other in ferocity and incredible barbarity. Lon Nol's forces were overwhelmed and became dispersed guerrillas as the erstwhile guerrillas, Khmer Rouge, took power. Under Pol Pot, these indigenes began a program of apparent genocide with the aim of returning Kampuchea to the Khmers. After the U.S. abandoned South Vietnam, the victorious Vietnamese communists invaded Cambodia to attack the Khmer Rouge, who dispersed once more into beleaguered guerrilla groups. And now Prince Sihanouk is back in the confusion as a rallying figure for a coalition of guerrilla groups now fighting together against numerically superior, better-equipped Vietnamese forces. Thailand, about to be drawn into the border warfare, declares that Vietnam is practicing genocide against the Cambodians.

All this brings us to the inescapable question: Should we be involved in this distant, many-faceted war which has raged intermittently for millennia? To find the answer, the causes which have drawn us into other conflicts outside our national boundaries must be examined. First of all, if a war is truly an internal affair, then in the name of democracy that country should be left alone to work out its own affairs and destiny. In the case of World War I and World War II, national borders were overrun by foreign forces. We went to their rescue and practically no one faulted us for it. But after World War II, the game changed drastically. Russian expansionism created a divided Germany as well as a galaxy of satellite countries conquered by subversion and brute force. Chinese communism and Russian support created a divided Korea. The goal of world dominion by communist Russia had become a fact of life. Before World War I and between the two world wars there had been talk about Fortress America, of withdrawing from the affairs of other nations. But the majority of Americans rejected that stance. With World War II and the creation of the United Nations, we were committed to the concerns and aspirations of other nations. When South Vietnam called for our help in establishing and maintaining a democracy, we went to her aid. We now have commitments to support a free Thailand, but the fear of another Vietnam debacle looms in our minds.

Despite opinions to the contrary, we could have won in Vietnam both diplomatically and militarily. Three factors contributed to our humiliating failure there: ineffective diplomats, poor propaganda, and insufficient firepower. Because of its shrewder diplomacy and tougher propaganda, Soviet Russia now occupies our bases in Vietnam, the airfields which we built at great expense, the seaports we developed. Throughout Europe and elsewhere, Soviet propaganda encourages "peace demonstrations" while the slightest flicker of a similar disarmament demonstration within the U.S.S.R. is instantly snuffed out. The cards are on the table, face up. As these two novels indicate, we need both national morality *and* a resolute international policy to win. □

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COMMENDABLES

Tender Transmutation

A. G. Mojtabai: ***Autumn;*** Houghton Mifflin; Boston.

by Joseph Schwartz

Autumn is a shy novel, its brevity a sign that it does not wish to call itself too insistently to our attention. Its shortness is also an indication of Miss Mojtabai's style—the use of suggestion to create overtones, things "divined by the ear but not heard by it": Willa Cather's novel *démeublé.* Of all styles open to the writer, it is the riskiest to use. To heighten our sense of the inexplicable but abiding mystery and charm of the real by suggestion alone remains the most arduous style to achieve. I cannot say that Miss Mojtabai has been altogether successful, but I am willing to applaud the risks she has taken and to commend her work.

One of her most tantalizing risks is the use of a taciturn first-person narrator. Will, now retired, tells his own story, and what he has to say must be, in a manner of speaking, forced out of him. The structural method is scenic, probably cinema-scenic rather than novel-scenic; very short tableaux are carefully orchestrated so as to move with systematic force toward climax and conclusion. The prose, as it should, disappears in the telling.

The novel speaks of being old, alone, and disappointed and eschews the conventions of melodrama. Will and his wife had their retirement all planned, except for her unexpected death. Alone now for five months, Will is determined to stay at his vacation home year-round. He never planned on being alone; he finds a newspaper headline to be aptly descriptive of his own life: UNIVERSE MAY BE COLLAPSING. "Where am I?" Will cries. He and his wife had been happy. His relationship with his only son, married and far away, is no longer a good one.

> Why didn't I enjoy him more and when did I last? I haven't changed, I don't think, but he has. Once he was loving, pert, sharp as a tack.

Will himself had been an "army brat," constantly on the move, only two years in each post. He "always wanted to stay put," having lost his pals because of the family's mobility. Staying put had a good deal to do with the strong relationship he had with his wife, and now with no one. He tries without success for a serious relationship with a widow. "I want to be looked after . . . that's what I miss." But she cannot break through the wall he has built around himself; she cannot take his late wife's place. "We push into each other's lives," and nothing comes of it but "backing up."

In his son's tree house Will discovers a teenage boy asleep. A runaway? Someone on a journey and simply resting? Possibly, perhaps, an imaginative projection of his great need to look after someone as well as to be looked after? The young stranger is described as sleeping like a baby in the tree house shortly after Will remembers how he would put his ear to his wife's stomach when his son was inside making a sound "like somebody knocking." What remains of this meditative novel is concerned solely with Will's discovery of another who can stand for his wife and son, someone who answers his need to cure his loneliness. The stranger does not waken in Will's presence, and when Will falls asleep while watching him, he disappears. Bloody or ghostly, the stranger is gone. Just as surely as autumn is a prelude to winter, so some sort of letting go precedes our dying. Like every man, Will must let go, albeit reluctantly, the things which tied him to the earth: his home, his wife, his son, his possessions. Recognizing mutability, he sheds things. The stranger, a transcendental visitor I think, is dark and cold. The angel of death? Will is tired: "I'll lie down only for a minute" before the journey and "rest."

When Will "awakens" no one is there. "How dark it is . . . . Someone out there calling my name? . . . Hello? I'm here." This evocative ending brings to mind one of Theodore Roethke's finer poems, "Meditations of an Old Woman." When she experiences intimations of mortality, she too challenges mutability with the cry, "I'm here." It is a towering cry of identity only if there is someone to hear it to whom our identity makes a difference.

There are "so many stories for growing up," Will says, "and none for growing down. How come?" Miss Mojtabai has done her best to correct that imbalance. □

Dr. Schwartz is a professor of English at Marquette University.

IN FOCUS

Impolite Impressions

William B. Helmreich: ***The Things They Say Behind Your Back: Stereotypes and the Myths Behind Them;*** Doubleday; New York.

by Frank Walters

A graduate student in the humanities will go out of his way to avoid stereotyping a racial minority and so think himself not a racist. Our cultural ethos demands that we view races equally in every way, which reduces each race to sameness. William B. Helmreich offers a corrective to such lightweight thinking by asserting that races, ethnic cultures, and other discrete groups of humans do possess features unique to themselves. But his book also exemplifies many of the flaws common to liberal inquiries into man and his habits. Though Helmreich observes the principle that serious inquiry must separate fact, theory, and conclusion, he weakens his analysis by embracing popular and deceptive definitions of important terms and by borrowing some of the trendy theories of sociology's more spurious pronouncements on human behavior.

What we usually mean by stereotyping is closer to a modern-day revision of the Socratic "know thyself." Man's first topic in philosophy was the self, and there he found a nature common to all men, i.e., specific traits of action and appearance. According to prevailing interpretations, these

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traits signified various moral, psychological, or physical attributes. The Renaissance theory of humors was one attempt to define man's psychological state. Because the nature of man was universal, its traits were not illustrative of races or cultures, but revealing of types of men: lustful or covetous, faithful or virtuous. Christian theology added its insights by merging the nature of man with free will and the Fall. Man's nature, although fashioned in the likeness of God, was depraved. Though the particulars of this depravity might differ from man to man—Chaucer shows many among his Canterbury pilgrims—original sin was at the bottom of each flaw. What one saw in others, he saw in himself. Thus, stereotyping became an interpretation of human behavior, reinforced by the opinion of mankind and the teaching of higher authority. As the root meaning of "stereotype" suggests, a proper stereotype was not, for instance, that Jews had large noses, but that lechers had large warts on their noses, for moral defects were thought to produce unpleasant physical side effects.

Stereotyping does not necessarily imply racism. As Helmreich correctly notes, most groups do possess unique features that differentiate them from each other. But they are features of the group, shared by its members, and not attributes of a specific member's human nature. It is useless to argue, as current wisdom says we must, that a group's negative stereotypes are false simply because they can also be found in other groups. They are found in men.

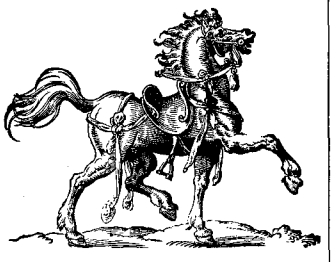
Current theories of race and of man's understanding of race are not sufficient for deep philosophical and theological thinking on the nature of man. For the liberal culture—and Helmreich, in his careless moments, ascribes to this view—stereotypes are racially motivated, as they "justify" and "reinforce prejudice." The chapter on black stereotypes seem to express his true feelings. There he creates a *new* stereotype: "If . . . one considers the real insults and degradation that an individual has suffered because of membership in a certain group, his 'hypersensitivity' might more aptly be called 'high sensitivity.'" Helmreich is whining, apologizing for antiwhite as well as pro-black sentiments. As noted earlier, one is bigotry, the other racism.

The book Helmreich wrote reminds us to use common sense in judging groups and informs us of some history behind contemporary stereotypes. The book he *could* have written, without losing the appeal to a general audience, would have been more useful yet. □

Southern Frye'd Journalism

Frye Gaillard: *Race, Rock & Religion: Profiles from a Southern Journalist;* East Woods Press; Charlotte, NC.

What a Southerner has to say about the South has long been an object of some interest for readers in every part of the country. Just why the South should inspire such curiosity is a complex question, perhaps as convoluted as the Southern culture itself. Certainly, no other part of the country has engendered such a spate of writing, both literature and journalism. And what other region in this century has formed writers like Margaret Mitchell, Thomas Wolfe, William Faulkner, Eudora Welty, and Flannery O'Connor? The diversity of Southern literature, coupled with news reports, TV shows, and movies has produced broad and often contradictory images of that area. It's the slow-moving, amiable locale of Eudora Welty and Andy Griffith; it's the soil from which the roily relationships portrayed by Wolfe and Faulkner grew; it carries the legacy of antebellum imagery; it's the center of fire-and-brimstone Southern preaching; it's the home of the Ku Klux Klan; it's where George Wallace spouted his "schoolhouse-door" oratory and blacks couldn't use the "white" drinking fountain; it's where much of American music began—bluegrass, country,



jazz, even rock 'n' roll.

In *Race, Rock & Religion* Frye Gaillard attempts to explicate both for himself and for outsiders these three aspects of the South. He has collected essays he wrote for various publications from 1973 to 1982 dealing with such subjects as Martin Luther King, Jr., the Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan, singers Elvis Presley and Willie Nelson, evangelists Jim Bakker and Billy Graham. The resultant blend is interesting, but not fascinating. Gaillard's straight journalistic style does well enough at the objective recording of facts: names, dates, places, events. But he does not seem to capture or convey any intrinsic sense of Southernness. He provides the written equivalent of a newspaper photograph rather than an insightful portrait.

As in any collection of separately written pieces encompassing nearly a decade, there is repetition and a certain disconnectedness. One thing *is* consistent, however: Gaillard's strongly liberal bias. It's fairly subtle; he uses the standard journalistic practice of implication and careful selection of adjectives. Thus liberal judges, rural blacks, civil-rights workers, pacifist preachers, activist Amerindians, and poor folks in general shine with righteousness, or at least good intentions, while the rich, the nonliberal, the apolitical are treated to subtle denigration, or, at best, utter neutrality. The chapter on Billy Graham provides an excellent example of this method. A 1981 essay describes the 1970's Graham as a shrill pulpit-pounder. In an appended "Epilogue, June 1982" commenting on Reverend Graham's visit to Moscow, Gaillard characterizes the evangelist as having mellowed; his words are now "prophetic and powerful."

Race, Rock & Religion is, in sum, both readable and informative—provided the reader adjusts for its quite definite slant to the left. (RW) □

Aesop in the Big Apple

Louis Auchincloss: *Narcissa and Other Fables;* Houghton Mifflin; Boston.

As the connotations surrounding *fabulous* suggest, the traditional fable seems rather unreal-

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istic in many respects: everyone knows, for example, that the animals usually appearing as main characters actually live by instinct, not the platitudinous morals they inevitably pronounce at the story's end. Despite their patently incredible elements, however, fables endure because they reflect underlying human realities. The very foundation of our humanity, our moral consciousness, comes into sharper focus when it is imaginatively relocated in beasts. And though the proverbs underscored by fables may seem unbearably trite, they represent an accumulated folk wisdom that survives because it is firmly rooted in the actual experience of many generations.

Unfortunately many modernists choose to sever themselves from the past generations and the lessons they would teach us. Consequently, in creating the modern fables of *Narcissa* Louis Auchincloss leads the reader not to a reiteration of timeworn saws but rather to a "glimpse into the ethical malaise of our century." It is primarily 20th-century New York City that Mr. Auchincloss has in view, though, and therefore the dustcover declaration that his fables "probe the heart of modern American life" seems debatable. Even if blood does flow more freely on its streets than anywhere else in America, New York does not seem otherwise qualified for designation as that particular part of America's metaphoric anatomy. Indeed, although Mr. Auchincloss's skillful depictions of feckless and misguided lawyers, artists, businessmen, and priests are doubtless accurate reflections of people actually found in the upper echelons of that city, their acute moral myopia makes them seem more truly like talking beasts than any creature ever imagined by the ancient Greek fabulist. Therefore most readers in Kansas, Maine, or Idaho will probably conclude this collection echoing the perception of one of Auchincloss's characters: "The whole thing was too ghastly to seem quite real." (BC) □

The Inevitability of Structural Decline

Claire Rayner: *Everything Your Doctor Would Tell You If He Had the Time;* Perigee Books; New York.

The tyranny of gravity is something that all humans strive against to no avail. Gravity is what causes the numbers on a bathroom scale to roll increasingly higher and postures to bend lower. Were a person to weigh him or herself on the Moon, not only would that person stand more erectly, but he or she would discover that the weight totals less. Studies in clinics devoted to gerontology are ongoing; the objective is to find out why the human body wears out: grows old. The answer might prove to be quite simple. As has been known for some 200 years, all objects with mass have a gravitational effect on all other objects with mass. The most well-known examples of this are Newton's apple being pulled to the bosom of Terra and the tides caused by the moon. Perhaps the fact that a person comes into contact with more and more objects throughout his days is key. The amount of stress on the body becomes multiplied. As all areas on or in any given body are not as structurally sound as others, some tend to give out under the strain. There is no escape from objects. Gravity is always with us. It is a no-win situation. Physicians play special roles in all of this. Not only do they have to try to maintain their own masses, but they must try to help repair or at least alleviate breakdowns occurring in the systems of others. As the number of humans proliferates (which causes an increasing pull on others), the doctors become more harried. Questions that patients may have can go unasked or unanswered because of that other great tyrant, time. Ms. Rayner provides succor through text and diagrams. Ultimately, it isn't much. But it helps. □

The Cartoon as Cultural Trace

John Gardner: *Icebreaker;* G. P. Putnam's Sons; New York.

Purists will never be satisfied with John Gardner's resurrection of Ian Fleming's James Bond. Similarly, there was that breed that thought Sean Connery could never be replaced by anyone—George Lazenby in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969) seemed to be all the evidence one could ever dream of. Still, Roger Moore has proven himself to be a capable Bond, even in the face of Connery's return to the role. The Bond purists who carefully compare Gardner's three books to Fleming's novels, always to the former's loss, intimate that there is something bordering on sacrilege in the character's reappearance—which is ridiculous. James Bond is now as much a part of popular culture as Dick Tracy and Dagwood. Few became indignant when the artists of those strips died and the funnies carried on. This is not to diminish the abilities of Chester Gould or Chic Young. It is to say that sometimes the character transcends the creator.

James Bond Mark II is more a product of the cinema than of the original set of novels. *Icebreaker* doesn't sound as if it was written for the screen; it sounds as if it was written *because* of the portrayals of Connery and Moore. Mr. Gardner, in the true Bond tradition, is a stickler for detail. His acknowledgments and photo on the dust jacket (the latter, "courtesy of Saab-Scania," shows him astride a snowmobile presumably in Finland, the primary setting of the novel) indicate that he soaked up local color before getting to work. There can be little doubt that Gardner spent time with Fleming's books (and perhaps with Kingsley Amis's *Colonel Sun*). Similarly, he must have logged many hours in a screening room: the cadence of the dialogue is scriptlike; one can imagine the action as captured through Panaflex lenses.

While the new Bond novels are essentially prose cartoons, Gardner's books do provide something of value: an inventory of some of the most notable products and services of the day. For example, in *Icebreaker* Bond stays at the Inter-Continental Hotel in Helsinki, reads Eric Ambler novels, drives a Saab 900 Turbo (with certain modifications, of course), wears insulated clothing made by Damart, shoots a Heckler & Koch P7, and so on. Precise names and an aura of quality are essential to the Bond books. Should these books survive—and given the popularity of James Bond, they probably will: Fleming's first in the series, *Casino Royale,* appeared in 1953—then they will be a veritable Tut's tomb for literary archaeologists of the next century. We can only hope that Bond remains a true-blue Westerner (he takes on the Soviets and a neonazi organization in *Icebreaker* with the semi-able assistance of the CIA and the very able help of SUPO, the Finnish Intelligence and Security Agency) and that he retains his impeccable taste. □

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WASTE OF MONEY

Soap Scum

Jon Cleary: *Spearfield's Daughter;* William Morrow; New York.

by Michael Jordan

This novel amounts to a jet-set soap opera. All the major characters save one are wealthy or power-hungry or both. Nearly all the men are "male chauvinists"; they all lust after the protagonist, who, the reader is repeatedly reminded, has "a very nice swagger." Each chapter is subdivided into short scenes that skip from character to character, subplot to subplot, theme to theme. With only minor alterations, *Spearfield's Daughter* could be sent to Hollywood and produced as a prime-time serial. Bloodshed in Vietnam, terrorism in Germany, Mafia racketeering in New York and Kansas City, and bedroom scenes throughout would ensure success with a television audience.

Spearfield's Daughter chronicles Cleo Spearfield's rise to fame and power in the newspaper world. Tired of walking in her father's shadow—he is a locally famous Australian Labor politician—she moves first to England, then to America, acquiring a name for herself as a purveyor (first a reporter, then an editor) of the news. A wealthy English publisher old enough to be her father opens doors for her—first to the London *Examiner,* his own paper, later to the *New York Courier.* One need not guess what doors she opens up for him in return for his assistance.

The main theme is Cleo's ambition—the *libido dominandi* and lust for fame which drive her to abandon youthful idealism and embrace the cynical attitudes and hypocritical ways she once deplored. She even stoops to blackmail. Cleo does feel guilty for some of her sins: she is haunted by her betrayal of truth and

idealism; she does not like being an English lord's whore. This could be the stuff of tragedy, but there is no tragedy in *Spearfield's Daughter.* Any possibility of it is destroyed by the author's continual cynical litany against traditional mores, the wickedness of the Pentagon, money-grubbing capitalists and the wealthy in general, male chauvinist pigs, all governments, and most politicians. All the baggage of the modern, secular, liberal agenda is strewn through Cleary's pages. Few institutions, traditions, or ideals escape his sneer. The pervading cynicism in the novel eliminates tragedy or satire or anything except trite novelties and liberal platitudes. It isn't even a satisfying thriller, which apparently was the author's intent. *Spearfield's Daughter* is likely to satisfy only soap-opera buffs. □

Mr. Jordan teaches English at a college preparatory academy in Tennessee.

Naked Trash

Joyce Johnson: *Minor Characters;* Houghton Mifflin; Boston.

Jack Kerouac is an ambiguous figure in the history of American literature. However, among the bacteria collectively known as "The Beats"—William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, etc.—Kerouac was a giant. There are a number of popular misconceptions about Kerouac. For example, he took a bus when he could; the amount of hitchhiking he did was minimal and he didn't like to drive. Still, there remains the image of the bebopping Sal Paradise hitchhiking along the road to freedom and excess—which is particularly inappropriate for a man who essentially lived his entire life with his French-Canadian mother. Then there is the concept that his books consist of typing, not writing. That is perhaps the most ridiculous and damaging idea associated with Kerouac. While he is nowhere near the level of James Joyce, that charge does bring to mind the one that claimed that Joyce didn't know how to use punctuation, as evidenced by the "Penelope" section of *Ulysses.* A look into *Visions of Gerard,* a sensitive book about a nine-year-old brother who died when Kerouac was four, or *The Town and the City,* which is more akin to something by Thomas Wolfe than anything by William Burroughs, would dispel the notion of Kerouac as one of those famous chimps banging away at typewriters. Kerouac's main problem as a writer, one that puts him into the sandlot league, is the fact that practically everything he wrote was autobiographical. Imagination plays a minor role in Kerouac's works. That is more than a slight problem for a creator of fiction. Those who seize upon Kerouac and don't attack him tend to overstate things in the other direction. These people tend to be less-talented pals, associates, acquaintances, contemporaries, and even writers and scholars. Many of these have turned Kerouac into an object upon which to feed. They are essentially parasites. One of the latest is Joyce Johnson.

What Richard Ellmann is to James Joyce, Ann Charters is to Jack Kerouac. Charters's *Kerouac* (1973) is a very comprehensive biography. The biography should be sufficient. If postgraduate students want to pursue the subject further, then so be it. But there isn't enough of Kerouac to support the number of books about him that emerge from presses both large and small. Joyce Johnson refers to Charters's biography in the first chapter of her memoir, though she doesn't name her competition. She writes: "I look in the index of the book . . . and there I find: *Joyce Glassman.* And half a dozen page references, having to do with approximately one-twentieth of my life, 1957-59, when I used to have that name." The cover of *Minor Characters* features a picture of Kerouac standing in front of a neon sign that presumably reads "Bar." In the background, out of the field of sharp focus, stands a young woman. A photo that must have been taken minutes before or after appears in *Kerouac,* though in it the woman is replaced by a man. What is clear is that the background isn't particularly important. The woman, of course, is Joyce Glassman. She once stood behind him; now she rides on Kerouac's back. Johnson dominates the foreground of *Minor Characters;* Kerouac has a minor role. Numerous, pointless details—including those that belong to the bathroom—about the life of Joyce Johnson fill the pages. It is one way to get around the insufficiency of Kerouac as a subject: skip him, but hang on to his name and image. But the cachet is beginning to smell. □

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Less Than Zero

***Monty Python's The Meaning of Life;* Written by Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, Michael Palin; Directed by Terry Jones; Universal.**

***Doctor Detroit;* Written by Carl Gottlieb, Robert Boris, and Bruce Jay Friedman (from a story by Bruce Jay Friedman); Directed by Michael A. Pressman; Universal.**

by Stephen Macaulay

Difference is the key to comedy. That is, in order for something to be comedic, there must be evidence of a norm from which the object or situation departs. An emperor strutting without clothing doesn't merit a second look in a nudist colony. The need for difference is particularly strong in the subgenre satire. Comedy and satire that are all figure without ground are buffoonery or raillery, trifles, oddities. Although Dr. Johnson was mistaken with regard to the object of the following comment (Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*), the general observation is correct: "Nothing odd will do long." The British humor troupe Monty Python's Flying Circus has been on the scene for a number of years; it made its big mark in American circles in 1972 with its film *And Now For Something Completely Different.* Both the players and the film *were* different. Since then, PBS has brought more of the skits and blackouts to audiences of television; Messrs. Chapman, Cleese, Idle, etc. have brought more of the same to the screen. Stanley Kauffmann of *The New Republic* calls the crew "six of the wittiest men alive" with regard to *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life.* These men circa 1983 are not witty; they are odd. What's worse, they have made themselves conventionally odd (not a contradiction in the final quarter of the 20th century) by performing variations on the same visual slapstick routines over and over and over again. Key to their latest chowder is the titillation that is supposed to be evoked by hearing grown men "talk dirty" in public. Someone should advise Mr. Kauffmann that such expressions are considered "wit" only in elementary school lavatories and should mention to the Flying Circus that Lenny Bruce has been dead for a number of years. Beyond potty mouths (literally and figuratively), there is nothing to the film but a number of juvenile antics. Moreover, there is nothing that permits differentiation between sense and nonsense. To call it meaningless would be to give a second someone the opening to say, "Ah ha! The Absurd!" and thus to tag the file with a smidgen of philosophy. But the film lacks even a jot of anything beyond itself, and it is nothing more than a mere cinematic soap bubble.

Pressman's *Doctor Detroit* is also light, but at least it has a mooring. It uses the *Don Quixote* theme, even to the point of making the wimplike hero a professor of literature who teaches *Le Morte d'Arthur* and who fights to protect the well-being (*honor* is no longer the word) of a group of working girls. This movie is another case of recycling, but it at least has the merit of being whimsical. However, it generates a powerful suspicion that the theme wasn't selected because of its timeless grace as much as because original approaches are rare in filmmaking today. □

Preterminal Filmmaking

***The Hunger;* Directed by Tony Scott; Written by Ivan Davis and Michael Thomas; MGM/United Artists.**

If the period of commercial filmmaking in this country is thought of in the context of the life of a man, then when Parker Tyler, a notable, idiosyncratic film critic, wrote *The Hollywood Hallucination* in 1944, the industry was in its mature thirties. Tyler didn't think so. In 1983 the industry is well into a period of decline and is showing clear signs of arteriosclerosis. Two observations made by Tyler in that book, while making sense in his context, are applicable to the situation today, especially to *The Hunger,* though innumerable other recent releases are equally ripe—or spoiled. *The Hunger* is a vampire film, which means that it is a part of a subgenre that has been in decline since Tod Browning's *Dracula* (1931). *Dracula* was followed by features ranging from *Dracula's Daughter* (1936) to *Dracula's Dog* (1978), and seemingly came to a full circle with the adaptation of the Broadway play of the same name in 1979. The first was lean and convincing. Since then, things have become increasingly extraneous. As Tyler noted about the industry in general, "Literature in the movies has assumed a minor role precisely in ratio to the increase of technical cinema effects." So, while Browning's film pays attention to Stoker's novel, the post-1931 films have concentrated on blood, smoke, turning humans into all manner of beasts, and the like. *The Hunger* eliminates the Count and his relatives, and there are no signs of the well-known incisors. Still, camera tricks are far more important than the story line, which is so thin that it borders on the nonexistent. Narrative is replaced by makeup. This concentration on the tricks of face paint brings up another comment from Tyler: "the most dependable money-makers are the star-personalities to whom the art of portrayal and the art of drama are the most remote considerations." In this case, director Tony Scott makes use of the "talents" of a fading French actress who has been employed by directors in-

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cluding Bunuel and Truffaut, a mannequinesque rock star, and an actress whose performances in Malle's *Atlantic City* and Mazursky's *Tempest* are overshadowed by her ample anatomy. In *The Hunger* they are not players. They are objects. The three are on the screen to attract viewers (demisophisticates, rock fans, voyeurs). They are null ciphers who never act but are simply manipulated as required.

Not one of the vampire movies made —including Browning's—is great cinema. However, most—including Polanski's *The Fearless Vampire Killers*—can be granted a minuscule amount of respect for acknowledging that there are moral norms, that there are good and evil. This is not the case in *The Hunger.* Evil is all pervasive; the ecology is rotten. The viewer is to feel sorry for a murdering monster who doesn't die but simply becomes ancient in a matter of hours; the viewer is to watch a graphic lesbian lovemaking scene as if it is a matter of convention, not perversion. It is vile, damned. Evil is seductive; it is not chic. Evil is to be opposed, not embraced. Certainly all civilized people know these things. Knowledge, however, implies thinking. Those operating in Hollywood today are not inclined to use their heads (with few exceptions); they are happily satisfied with using the talents of technicians who can generate special effects with no strings showing and the abilities of those who have mastered the trick of gaining maximum publicity through pandering to base tastes. Perhaps the movie industry in 1983 is not unlike the creature in *The Hunger* who doesn't die, just progressively rots. (SM) □

ART

From France

***The Work of Atget: The Art of Old Paris;* The Museum of Modern Art; New York.**

***The Work of Atget: Old France;* The Museum of Modern Art; New York.**

***Masterpieces from the Pompidou Center;* Thames and Hudson; New York.**

The Work of Atget, by now a sacred phrase among the cognoscenti, stands for a collection of pictures by a French photographer, Eugene Atget (1857-1927). Photography was a French invention, so it seems fair to remember—whenever there is a debate about the art of picture-taking—that it was the French who also endowed photography with those intangibles that transform craft into art. Thus, though photography is perhaps the most advanced method of registering the visible facts—not truth, mind you—its realism hardly relates to metaphysics, art's principal protein. Yet the faded sepia of old French daguerreotypes and plates gives us a strange feeling that we are facing art.

Enter an unassuming silent genius, M. Atget, who called himself a professional photographer and who, instead of producing commemorative portraits, though he probably did that as well ("Oh, anyone who's ready to sacrifice for mankind should stop in front of a small-town photographer's display window!" exclaimed a Russian novelist) also produced something which he modestly called "documentations." From that grew an almost-monumental but also poignant visual record of Frenchness fixed in images of landscapes, vegetation, architecture, boats, bridges, etc. Together they constitute a unique reflection of the rapport that exists between the nature of a nation and its place on earth. If civilizations have spiritual fragrances, if culture can be put into fragmented images, and if both can materialize in a visual mood transfixed on a photographic plate—M. Atget captured them all. There's something inexplicably rich in the evocations that M. Atget's portraiture of Frenchness (as it is determined by both geography and history) brings to our sensitivities. This wealth of associations may also stem from the power of French literature: after all, how many intimately known characters inhabited these villages, streets, palaces, Parisian *carrefours;* how many roamed through M. Atget's meadows, mused under his trees, sat on the banks of his placid rivers and serene ponds; how many unforgettable literary scenes were situated in his settings; how many ideas that are now integral parts of the Western mind floated freely in his air, precisely clear or wisely misty, but always superbly subservient to M. Atget's magic camera?

The beautifully reproduced masterpieces from France's most modern (and lately most discussed) shrine of contemporary art, the Pompidou Center in Paris, are masterpieces only if we agree that they are just that. They certainly represent a distinguished collection. What hovers over them, however, is the legitimate and never-ending dispute about the criteria that are valid and relevant to establishing *what* a masterpiece *is* in the vortex of the cultural phenomenon called avant-garde—which, for nearly a century has never shed its youthful pretensions, yet which has done nothing to persuade us that its sense and nature is

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evolving, transforming, changing. To an unprejudiced eye, the idea of avant-garde ended with Picasso, cubism, Léger, their contemporaries who proposed a new concept of reality, and with a few lonely geniuses like Braque, Matisse, and Chagall, who offered new structures of visions and symbols. Everything after, whatever its name, was either visual amusement, or epigonism, or charlatanry.

Paging through the superbly published overview of the Pompidou Center's riches one gets an uneasy feeling that what made modern art tick was an impulse to make an infinitely abstruse world even less understandable. Images on the canvas were supposed to explain nothing; inexplicability and unaccountability for responsibilities of meaning reigned supreme. The artist's credo and pride was to say: "Take it or leave it, like it or hate it, I couldn't care less." For a multitude of reasons, most of them rooted in the liberal philosophy of life and its radical mission to destroy the bourgeois culture (God only knows why, since that culture had proved to be a generous incubator of nonconformism in the arts), modern society decided to give the artist the privileges of a toddler: he was freed from the obligation to understand his own purposes, and we were supposed to love him just for his beautiful babble.

Much has been already written about the inherent nullity of that concept of art, yet we do not know exactly why—that art's sin of gimmickry notwithstanding—it still possessed, in the first quarter of this century, a sort of unmatched sensual attractiveness. Is it that conceptual freshness or the sheer talent of its practitioners which so crassly eludes its epigones today? Why a total liberation of perception, antielemental and anti-organic decomposition of the visible, and the demolition of perceptual cohesiveness were alluring, even charming then but seem farcical and vexing in today's imitations is a mystery. The dry, almost comically obtuse "connoisseurship" of the catalog notes explains nothing. The reliance on subjective criteria "liberated" from any objective cognitive standards and on the pseudosophistication of art historians who try to support it have long since reached a dead end. Leafing through the Pompidou Center's treasures, it somehow becomes sadly clear that everything done after 1945 is either repetition or scam or art business or a fusion of all three. (LT) □

Meanwhile, 216 Years Later

Tom Phillips: *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel;* Thames and Hudson; New York.

Laurence Sterne taught the world a lesson with his *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (completed in 1767) that the world promptly forgot. Since then, formalists, New Critics, structuralists, deconstructionists, and partisans of various other tribes have tried to reformulate Sterne's message. They have not been noticeably successful. While this may be presumptuous of us, we will take a crack at restating Sterne: the book is a physical object. Everyone *knows* that, of course, but few pay any attention to it. However, upon encountering the black pages in memory of Yorick, the marbled page ("motley emblem of my work!"), the missing 10 pages (Chapter 24 of Volume IV), and the rest, the reader is confronted with the fact that he isn't holding a portable story, but a physical object. *A Humument* by Tom Phillips has the same effect. The "treated" in its subtitle is an example of meiosis—a rare thing in today's bullhorn world. Phillips took a novel written by W. H. Mallock and reprinted in 1892 as *A Human Document* and, through the use of acrylic gouache, pen and ink, a typewriter, and glue, turned the black type on white pages with consistent margins into a colorful object. Words remain, passages are constructed (some sounding like epigrams, modern verse, nonsense, or all of the above), and the author—no, the *editor,* which is what Phillips amounts to—claims that there still remains a narrative line. But the book is best seen or observed, not read. To concentrate on the words is like going to an art museum only to read the tags next to the paintings. □

MUSIC

Good Old Phonography

By Doug Ramsey

In the absence of a major innovator to set trailblazing examples, musicians during the past few years have been exploring the jazz tradition. The resulting consolidation of established values has enriched the playing of young musicians and called attention to their forebears who created and developed the music. A great deal of the important music from the first half-century of jazz is being reissued—in some cases, issued for the first time. Listeners are discovering or rediscovering the genius of the innovators who made it possible for American music to evolve at accelerated speed. In a similar time frame, classical music would have had to make stylistic changes from Palestrina to Stravinsky in less than a century.

Nearly the entire evolution of jazz as a recognizable idiom is represented on available recordings. For example, Louis Armstrong, the man who is arguably the

Mr. Ramsey writes about jazz from California.

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single most powerful figure in the history of this music, can be studied and enjoyed in every major phase of his artistic growth. There are other Louis Armstrong collections besides the Book-of-the-Month Club's *Louis Armstrong: Rare And Unreleased Performances* (BOMC 21-6547), but none of them is more entertaining or more broadly representative of Armstrong's ability to transform even banal material into glorious music. Some of his prophetic phrases—evident in much of the included Okeh material—were years ahead of musical developments. No instrumentalist has been able to invoke greater emotion than Armstrong. His muted opening chorus on "In The Gloaming" is concentrated passion. In other pieces in the same album, the transformations he works upon straight melody with the straight mute amount to alchemy.

While most of the BOMC collection is made up of previously released material, many of the selections are, as advertised, rare. The final LP of the three-record set consists of unissued performances by the Armstrong All-Stars of the 1950's. It includes superb trumpet work, fetching vocals by Armstrong with the misunderstood and maligned Velma Middleton, an unlikely—but charming—duet with Lotte Lenya on "Mack the Knife," and a collaboration with Dave Brubeck and Carmen McRae in which Brubeck's "The Duke" is given lyrics and becomes "You Swing, Baby." Armstrong and McRae melded well; it is unfortunate that they did not record together more often.

Armstrong is also featured on three performances in *Newport* (Columbia CS 38262), unreleased material recorded at various Newport Jazz Festivals of the 1950's and 60's. "Rockin' Chair" reunites him with trombonist/singer Jack Teagarden, his ideal foil and soul mate. There's a stirring "On the Sunny Side of the Street" from 1958 with Armstrong fronting a big band made up of European musicians. The album has superior music by Rex Stewart, Ben Webster, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, Willie "The Lion" Smith, and Teddy Wilson. There are also appearances by Dave Brubeck, Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk, and Gerry Mulligan, who were then in the front ranks of jazz modernists. Their work of the period has now become part of the mainstream tradition.

Following Armstrong in the stylistic development of jazz trumpet was Roy Eldridge. *Little Jazz and the Jimmy Ryan All-Stars* (Pablo 2310-869) presents Eldridge at the helm of the band with which he worked until recently at the New York club, Jimmy Ryan's. Recorded in 1975, Eldridge played with all the fire and combativeness of his youth. If his control was diminished, he compensated with a depth of harmonic wisdom and with great good humor in his playing and his blues singing, which is elemental. Joe Muranyi, a former Armstrong clarinetist who has long been underappreciated, is in top form here. The rhythm section of drummer Eddie Locke, bassist Major Holley, and pianist Dick Katz, is superb.

Approaching 80, Doc Cheatham is an elderly trumpeter whose technical abilities are the envy of players less than half his age. Cheatham was harmonically advanced in the 1920's. He continues to play with uniquely bittersweet inventiveness and a clean sound that has only a hint of vibrato. In *Black Beauty* (Sackville 3029), Cheatham and 75-year-old pianist Sammy Price play 10 songs by black American composers. The trumpeter's tone ranges from airy when he uses a straight mute on "Travelin' All Alone" to brilliant when he opens the horn for his buoyant second solo on "Some of These Days." Price, a pianist of greater range than his boogie-woogie label indicates, accompanies Cheatham propulsively in rhythm pieces and with an uncloying sweetness in ballads. This is one of the most satisfying duo recordings of recent years.

Sackville has also issued, belatedly, an album recorded in 1973 by the Canadian soprano saxophonist Jim Galloway (*Three Is Company,* Sackville 2007), in which he and pianist Dick Wellstood explore some of the traditional repertoire, as well as original compositions and standard songs. Drummer Pete Magadini accompanies with grace and taste. Galloway can be heard to emulate Sidney Bechet, the Prometheus of the soprano sax, in the ferocity of his attack, although he does not attempt the master's whipsaw vibrato. He is particularly energetic in Fats Waller's "Minor Drag," with Wellstood churning and striding in support. Bechet's "Broken Windmill" is given a perfect unison reading by Galloway and Wellstood and has first-rate solos by each. Strangely, Galloway has harmonic difficulties on the simple "Lulu's Back in Town." Many of the passing tones in his improvisation are inappropriate to the chords. But by and large, his work is more than respectable. On Jelly Roll Morton's "Buddy Bolden's Blues," Galloway spins a sinuous line that remains in the memory. Wellstood plays typically here, that is, with a deep sense of the jazz piano tradition, unfailing swing, an improbable but satisfying melding of stride patterns and modern harmonies, and great wit. Galloway's clarinet work on "I'd Climb the Highest Mountain" is reminiscent of the idiosyncratic playing of the late Pee Wee Russell.

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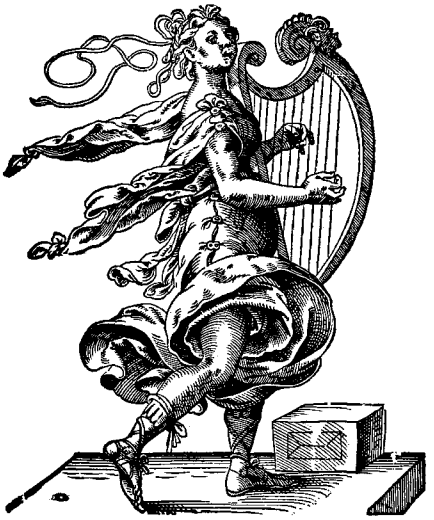
No one, however, can duplicate Russell's endearingly off-center conception. His own exposition of "I'd Climb the Highest Mountain" in *Over the Rainbow* (Xanadu 192) is a prime example of Russell at his unclassifiable best. The odd biplay between Russell and drummer George Wettling in this 1958 date makes the album worthwhile. Russell and seminal tenor-saxophone stylist Coleman Hawkins played together in 1929 in a legendary recording of "If I Could Be With You One Hour Tonight" by the Mound City Blue Blowers. In 1961 they did another version that included drummer Jo Jones, trumpeter Emmett Berry, bassist Milt Hinton, pianist Nat Pierce, and valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer. Reissued as *Jazz Reunion* (Jazzman 5042), the date is timeless. Both Russell and Hawkins played with great power.

Dutch Treat (Xanadu 198) is a collection of Hawkins recordings made from 1936 to 1938, when he was taking Europe by storm. Except for the American pianist Freddy Johnson, Hawkins's companions in these rare items are barely adequate. But his own playing has heat, headlong motion, and a compelling majesty that send him soaring over all obstacles. This album is essential to any serious Hawkins collection.

Okeh Jazz (Columbia EG 37315) is not the best possible sampling of that lamented label's jazz output, and it is overweighted with Arnett Cobb's tenor saxophone exercises. Nonetheless it is good to have Cobb's 1950 "Smooth Sailin' " available again, and a surprise to be reminded that Johnny Griffin once played baritone sax in Cobb's band. Griffin, on his customary tenor sax, is featured as leader in four small-band pieces from 1954; his full-bodied sound and aggressive style were fully formed at age 26. Pianist Ahmad Jamal's advanced harmonies and subtle uses of silence make his debut 1951 recordings remarkably undated. Mary Ann McCall's singing holds up well in four 1947 selections featuring an all-star band arranged by



Ralph Burns. Organist Wild Bill Davis is pure concentrated energy with his trio, particularly in his celebrated arrangement of "April in Paris," which was later expanded by Count Basie's band and made an enormous hit.

1952 saw Basie's full reentry into the big-band business after a two-year retrenchment. *Paradise Squat* (Verve VE 2-2542) contains 29 pieces recorded that year. This band was preparation for the Basie juggernaut of the mid-50's. But the music is not mere preamble. The peerless rhythm section and the famous Basie riffs continue the old Kansas City tradition. *Basie Reunion* (Prestige P-24109) is a reissue of 1957 and '58 sessions with eight veterans of various editions of the band, plus the ubiquitous Nat Pierce, long an effective Basie surrogate in projects of this kind. The all-time championship Basie rhythm section of guitarist Freddie Greene, drummer Jo Jones, and bassist Walter Page is on the first disc. Eddie Jones, Basie's bedrock bassist of the 50's, is on the second. The swing is irresistible.

The Cool Rage (Verve VE 2-2544) presents the passionate tenor saxophone of Illinois Jacquet in several early-1950's settings. The collection includes his collaborations with Count Basie, of whose occasional Fats Waller-like organ work these are among the best examples. *Seven Come Eleven* (Columbia FC 38265) is titled after Benny Goodman's famous riff tune coauthored in the early 1940's with guitarist Charlie Christian. In these 1975 recordings the guitar work is by George Benson, a musical descendant of Christian. Benson, of course, was a remarkable jazz soloist long before he hit the pop charts as a singer. Goodman is excellent in all settings on the album. With the group that includes Benson, he is inspired.

Thelonious Monk—Live at The Jazz Workshop (Columbia C2-38269) is an hour-and-a-quarter of the pianist and his finest quartet in previously unissued 1964 performances taped at the San Francisco Club, which has long since disappeared. Monk, doggedly publicized by the popular press as weird and far out, embodied the jazz tradition and expressed it uncompromisingly with wit and a stunning musicianship that was unconcerned with convention. The true value of his music is only now, more than a year after his death, beginning to be appreciated beyond the jazz community. These pieces, typical of his music in the mid-60's, are beautiful, deep, surprising. The 1965 version of the Miles Davis Quintet's *Live at The Plugged Nickel* (Columbia C2-38266), previously available only on Japan's CBS/Sony label, caught the trumpeter's band on a night when he was playing with raw emotion. The heat of Davis's mood was caught by tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter, who responded by taking outrageous chances and creating solos that rose like great jagged mountains from the noisy Chicago club surroundings.

Quite apart from the jazz tradition, yet inescapably related to it, singer-guitarist-harmonicist-kazooist Jesse Fuller's *San Francisco Bay Blues* (Good Time Jazz S10051) has been reissued. "The amazing one man band," as the late Lester Koenig called Fuller, comes roaring and prancing out of the past with his galvanizing amalgam of folk music and blues. *San Francisco Bay Blues* is an infectious piece of music; making it available again is a public service. □

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Letter from Washington: On Politics and Pulpits

by Thomas Molnar

For two weeks in March, a group of 30 European journalists were guests of the Young America's Foundation in Washington, D.C. It was a motley group; as specified by the organizers, all were under 35 years of age: Danes, Spaniards, Greeks, French, Scots, Dutch, Germans, Swedes. Why under 35? Because we persuade ourselves that "youth" is impressionable, and that he who sees America loves and imitates it. Yet some of these sharp-eyed and curious journalists signified their discontent quite soon, claiming the conference was one-sided: more of Reagan than of Kennedy, too much lecturing and condescension, and no panels on which there would be a confrontation between U.S. and European views. "Are Americans not interested in what *we* have to say? Or is this a mini-NATO with the U.S. in command?"—were some of the critical remarks.

Yet the program was rich and varied, although without opportunities outside the question-and-answer periods for these men and women to explain how they see the anti-Pershing protest, the perspectives of "Finlandization," America's role at Geneva. Instead, they had to listen to such things as a retired general calling in the same breath for a spiritual revival under God *and* a vigorous nuclear-armament program. Most of them left the auditorium after the first half hour. "You are still the old crusaders," a participant commented to me, "but such an approach turns us off." And when a speaker devoted 30 minutes to excoriating our abortion policy, the journalists were nonplussed: "What does that have to do with us? We did not come here to listen to sermons."

As one of the lecturers, I felt it was my duty to explain a few realities to the overseas guests. First thing was to challenge their dissatisfaction with the supposedly one-sided program: "Would you have complained," I asked, "if your speakers had adopted, one-sidedly, the Kennedy-Mondale-O'Neill line? Obviously not, since the media in your countries play up that line as the only one worth listening to. Now at least you hear a much-neglected side of what America *also* thinks." The second point, harder to explain, was that this country was founded on preaching, sermonizing, crusading—appeals to God. The visitors, some of whom felt they were isolated from "real America," were in fact immersed in it. Coincidentally, without previous planning, a large group consisting of young and old "average" Americans was holding its sessions in an adjacent auditorium. The issue under debate was "security and peace." It was a church group, and it began its antinuclear discussions with a prayer every morning. Were the journalists perceptive enough to understand that the United States—from grass roots to White House—needs God or some version thereof to give it good conscience and confidence?

Perhaps unknown to themselves, the visitors did not only observe; they were observed. The questions worth asking are: What does this representative sample of the European generation between 25 and 35 think of the world, its politics, ideology, religion; and What message for the future could they convey to American ally-watchers?

Whatever formula Americans fit, in the journalists's eyes, *their* formula is far from reassuring. By and large, the guests favored the status quo. Politically, the no-longer-contradictory term "liberal-socialist" would apply to them. They would vote, one gathers, for parties advocating the free market, provided social and economic legislation leans to the left, or vote for the Socialists, provided the private sector is maintained as an economic locomotive, or less elegantly, in Helmut Schmidt's phrase, as the "cow we can milk." Whether this is "social democracy," "welfarism," or "liberalism with a human face," is hard to judge, but one thing is certain: "Reaganism" is not *sympathique* in the eyes of these young men. It rubs them the wrong way. One reason is economic in nature. To a large extent they are opposed to it because it contradicts their overarching quest for keeping matters as they have been. They think that Moscow should be opposed —but so should Reagan's Washington. If contemporary fin de siècle Europe had an emblem, its inscription might be: "Leave us alone to cultivate our garden." Not a very heroic statement, but it would probably get 99% of a continentwide vote. It seems that the visitors would be most happy if Walter Mondale was elected in 1984.

Such a lukewarm, don't-rock-the-boat attitude also reflects their spiritual choice. Conversations with German nationalists, Spanish Catholics, French monarchists, Swedish and Dutch anti-communists, and others revealed that even those with a Christian background have a strong anticlericalist conviction, and they suggested that religion is strictly a private matter. They simply could not comprehend that in America religious issues do mix with almost any publicly taken position; they saw this as a sign of fanaticism. The conference was millimeters away from concluding that the U.S. is medieval and Europe is modern. In effect, a secularized Western Europe

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confronted a puritanical North America.

Thus the hoped-for dialogue did not take place, although it bears repetition that the 30 journalists were by no means systematic anti-Americans, peaceniks, or militants for the Third World. The Americans with whom the visitors came in contact were baffled by the nuances which permit pro-free-market preferences to coexist with softness toward Moscow, or skepticism about American will to protect Europe to coexist with fear of cold-war rhetoric in the White House. The Europeans were similarly baffled by Americans who were exclusively involved with refining their way of life and fine-tuning their domestic issues, but still claiming to lead a worldwide alliance. They felt Europe was a pretext for American war games and crusades.

While the American side was anxious to "explain" America and to "educate" the foreigners, the latter seemed resolutely impervious, indeed hostile, to what they perceived as almost crude ideological propaganda. Thus most talks were at cross purposes: Americans would bring up the danger posed by Cubano-Sandinistas; the "Europeans" replied that this was an aggressive reassertion of the Monroe doctrine and that Soviet submarines in Swedish waters were the greater threat. Seemingly common concerns—Afghanistan or a South Atlantic strategy—were not raised. "We cannot afford flights of fancy," one visitor said. "What for America is a far-off choice, for us is life or death *now*." The table was turned on the United States, rich and carefree, playing with other nations' destinies, whether Iran or El Salvador or Western Europe.

What impressions did the "impressionable young men" take home with them? Those for whom this was a first glimpse of the U.S. found it overwhelming, but not imitable. There is simply no basis of comparison; an "Atlantic Community" would be a misnomer. For veteran visitors, America is full of things worth noting and returning to, but it is also a closed world with no antennae for outside listening, contented in its basic isolation—linguistic, moral, institutional. "The more you preach to us," one journalist summed it up, "the more irritated we become. Carter's emissaries preached 'human rights,' Reagan's talked capitalism and missiles. The voice is inconsistent, but the salesmanship is aggressive. What do you expect to achieve in the face of low-keyed, subtle, but deadly serious Russians?" Yet what remains after this conference and its anticipations of future frustrations is the hope (shadowed by doubt) that Washington can prevent both "Finlandization" and war. *This* is the background for the dialogue, forever inconclusive, forever resumed. □

The American Proscenium

Margaret Thatcher's Trafalgar

The recent British election—described by the press as a smashing, historical, astounding victory—will have a profound impact on the American political scene. Despite all the demographic, ethnic, and racial differences between our societies, Britain remains a sociocultural organism closely linked to our own national composition by countless civic sensitivities and sentiments: what happens there means a great deal to many of us.

British conservatism, a complex and often-enigmatic force, has always been presented by its enemies as a class construct, a concept of the defense and preservation of entrenched, morally suspect class privileges. Yet three personalities of historical stature who shaped modern British conservatism defy that notion: Disraeli, who was maligned by his conservative opponents and detractors as a Jewish arriviste; Winston Churchill, who was for his entire life bitterly at odds with his own social class; and finally Margaret Thatcher, who is derisively referred to by the remnants of British aristocracy as the "grocer's daughter." Which means that there does exist in the modern conservative formula a seminal moral and cultural substance that transcends the ossified Marxian, post-Marxian, and radical-liberal interpretations of nation, society, and class structure, an element that *can* be translated into new political factors, perhaps even movements, of unexpected magnitude.

This is exactly the lesson for us. Our conservatism—as of today—has a powerful, though neglected, ratio of pluralistic, ethnic, and emotional ingredients whose dynamics is moral and cultural. The liberal left tries to co-opt, minimize, or simplify these elements, quite rightly fearful of them in our hands. Unfortunately, our leaders are playing *their* game—they seem unable to weld economic recipes, political postulates, and sociocultural principles into one victorious proposition whose acceptance by America would be both profound and lasting. One hopes that Mrs. Thatcher's triumph will give those leaders some food for thought. □

The Octopus and a Harvard Professor

A strange, even fascinating spectacle is in the making, and we will watch it with a sort of schadenfreude—not a beautiful sentiment, but a very human one. One Seymour Hersh, a former *New York Times* investigative reporter, one of the most repulsive blackguards and revilers in the free community of semi-intellectual piracy called the American press, has taken on Dr. Henry Kissinger of well-defined notoriety. In a newly published book, Mr. Hersh accuses the former Secretary of State of unheard-of political and professional felonies, not to mention countless minor ethical transgressions of a particularly slimy texture.

We were never convinced of either Mr. Kissinger's moral purity *sans reproche* or his paramount virtues of soul and mind. We deem his record as the

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helmsman of American foreign policy quite ambiguous, if not outright suspect of containing gross errors. Yet we also firmly believe that, at this juncture of history, the American liberal press is an evildoer nonpareil, a disseminator of both social diseases and social unfairness on a scale unknown before. By masquerading as the self-appointed defender of "the people's right to know" (its moral rationale), the press lets people know only that which serves the perpetuation of its own power. It is an all-powerful practitioner of moral myopia and illiteracy. Its liberal despotism and monopoly of according visibility to both people and ideas makes it the only totalitarian element in the living body of the American democracy at the end of this century. As such, it reminds us of a giant octopus that paralyzes its victim with abominable suction, and devours it only a long, long time after having rendered it completely unable to defend itself.

Mr. Hersh seems to us the embodiment and symbol of the contemporary American press; he is its flesh and blood and one of its most successful freebooters. What we have always thought (and still think) about Mr. Hersh was best formulated in a *Rockford Papers* issue from September 1980 entitled "The Media as Present Danger":

> A certain Mr. Seymour Hersh, a *New York Times* investigative ace, the reporter who provided the first account of the My Lai massacre and—as they say—blew the whistle on the CIA, when asked what motivated his painstaking, invigilative journalism, answered coolly: 'A hell of a story . . .' One would expect from a professional of his standing a subtler sense of purpose, some kind of ethical, if not ideological, commitment, but Mr. Hersh seemed unperturbed by such soulfulness. 'Guess who is the final arbiter of national security in this democracy?' he added. 'We (that is, the media) are . . . We have the bottom line. We get a document. We don't have any clearances to get . . . It's up to us. And that's the way it is. I'm sorry if you don't like it.' . . . The bestiality of Mr. Hersh's mind and his willingness to use it in the most licentious manner . . . means that whatever wisdom Western intellect has gathered, from Terence through Aquinas to Joyce and Faulkner, it is completely foreign to Mr. Hersh's intelligence and beyond his moral sensitivities. The knowledge that mistakes and misdeeds are verifiable, that sons pay for the sins of their fathers, means nothing to Mr. Hersh, or presumably to his employer, the *New York Times*, for whom the 'hell-of-a-story' morality is the bottom line of all responsibility, duty and civic accountability.

This is why, in the pending Hersh-Kissinger bout, we will root for the latter. □

JOURNALISM

Family Journalism

We have never concealed our opinion of *Parade Magazine*, the weekly fare of countless American households which bills itself as a family paper. To our mind, it is an archetypal organ of old lowbrow hacks who make a buck by debasing information and manipulating the readers' worst propensities. Here is how one of those hacks, a certain Lloyd Shearer, plies his trade in a story about John F. Kennedy's carnal exploits:

> [Inge, one of Kennedy's paramours] settled in Berlin, where her sexuality attracted the Nazi brass—Hitler, Goering, Goebbels and von Ribbentrop.

Whatever happened to descriptive and definable notions like: "her bodily charms," "her femininity," "her appetites," "her appeal," "her dissoluteness," "her sensual manners," "her sensuousness," "her passionate nature," and so on? Does Mr. Shearer believe he is stylistically and journalistically more precise by being "in" and "with it"? Does he not realize that he's rather farcical, trivial, and repulsive? □

Rights & Privileges

"Confidentiality," according to *Webster's*, is the condition of being "entrusted with private or secret matters." According to the journalistic community in America anno Domini 1983, it means the sovereign privilege to be nonnegotiably unaccountable to any of the established institutions of a free society—the courts, executive and legislative powers, public opinion. The 20th-century interpretation of the First Amendment, its use as the ultimate weapon to enforce this privilege, and its application to our time's affairs would send Jefferson into convulsions.

Thus, when a judge ordered CBS to make accessible data that the network used to assassinate the character of General Westmoreland, the former U.S. Army commander of all troops in Vietnam, Mr. Van Gordon Sauter, CBS *News* president, complained that such a verdict violated his privilege of confidentiality. "Sometimes I think the plaintiff's lawyers want to open our desk drawers," he lamented bitterly. He never mentions that, as a journalist, he sees a God-given commandment condoning *his* ruthless, forcible prying into everybody else's drawers. When reporters rummaged through Nixon's and Kissinger's trash cans, that, of course, was investigation. If we ask Mr. Sauter to unveil how he gathered false, unfounded, injurious information, he cries that we are robbing him of his right to confidentiality. Nothing seems more loathsome to him than *another's* right to confidentiality, especially if that other is an *elected* official to whom, by the act of voting, we entrusted *some* rights of confidentiality. With the mentality of our contemporary journalistic friends of the Constitution, who needs enemies? □

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